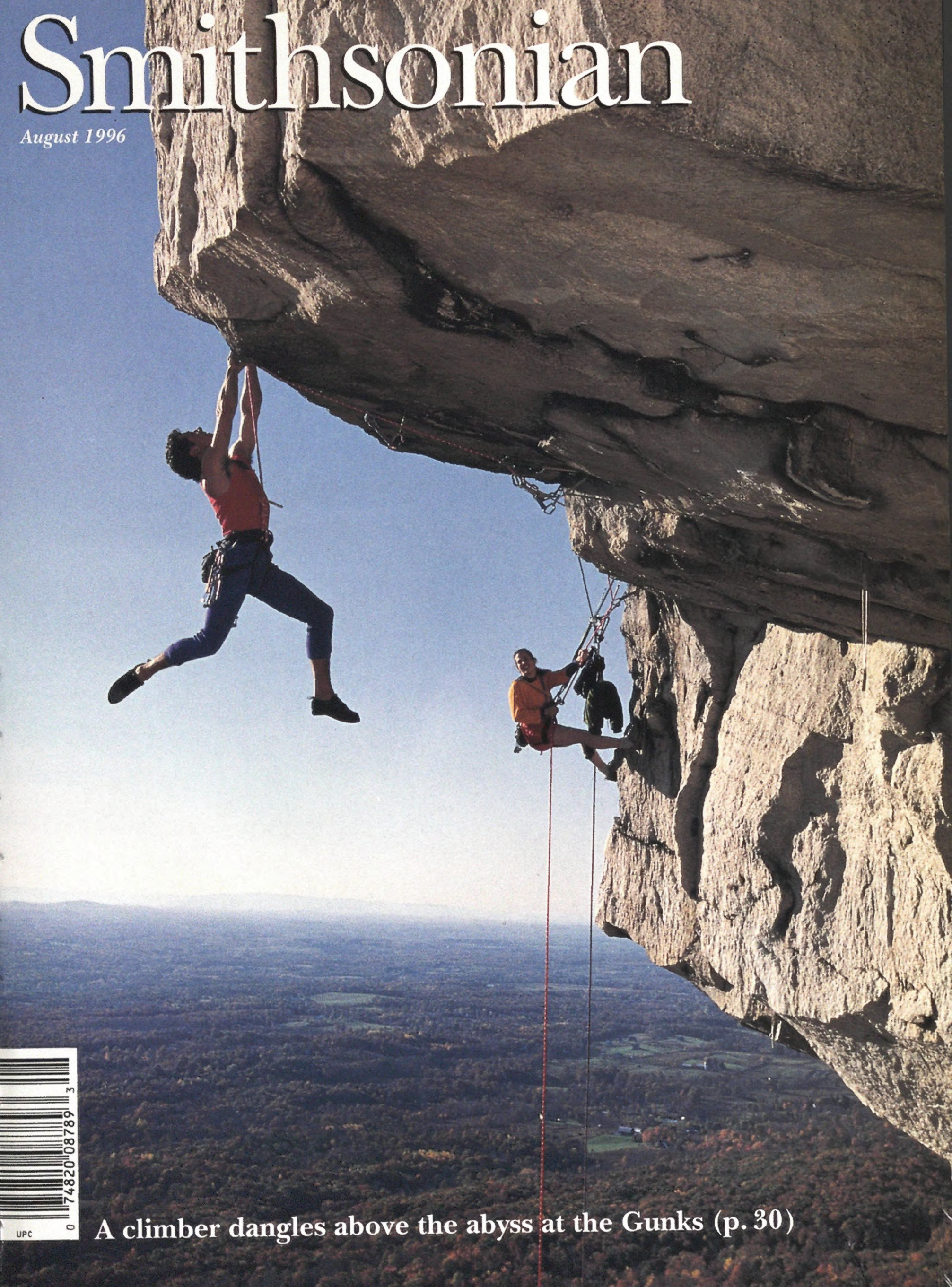
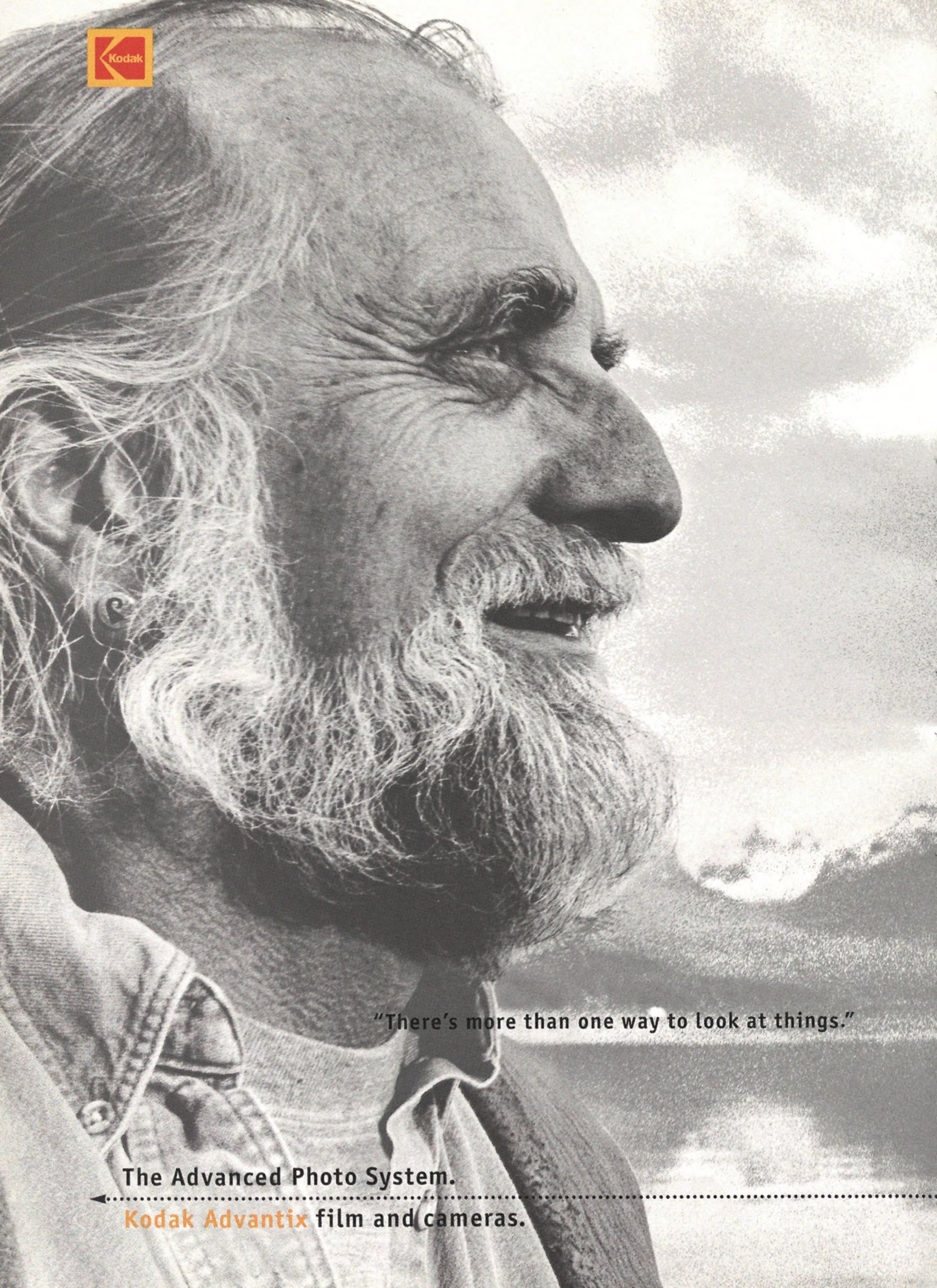
Smithsonian

August 1996



A climber dangles above the abyss at the Gunks (p. 30)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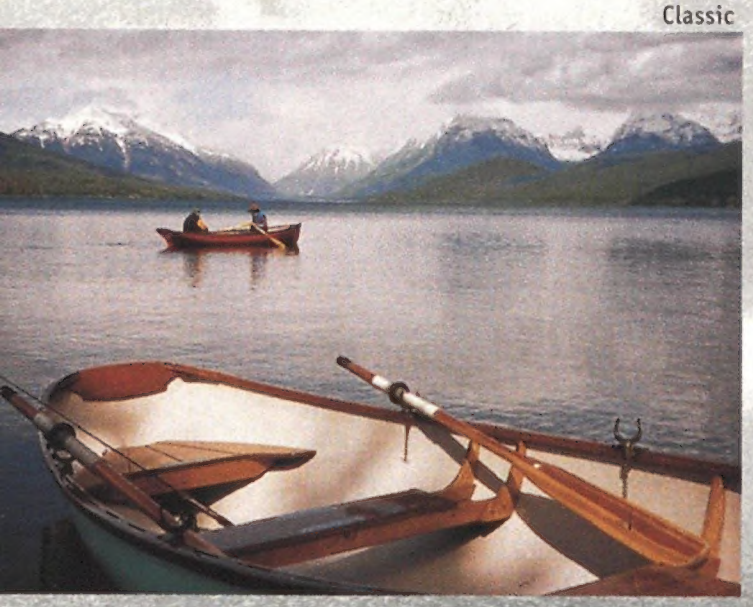

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Smithsonian *features*

August 1996
Volume 27, Number 5

23

52

23 First stop: the Lewis and Clark Expedition
The Smithsonian time machine takes Bill Clinton, Cal Ripken and others to their favorite moments in history

30 High adventures in the Gunks
The author rescales the cliffs where, 30 years ago, the Vulgarians schooled him in climbing and carousing
David Roberts, photographs by James Balog

42 A conservatory in tune with the times
At Boston's renowned Berklee College of Music, students learn not only to play—but to make a living at it
By Rudolph Chelminski, photographs by Richard Schultz

52 The sunflower's got star power
The once humble *Helianthus* is today's hot crop, yielding tasty seeds, oil and a perky image that sells and sells
By Katharine Whittemore

62 'It's déjà vu all over again'
Sound bites may seem like a recent phenomenon, but they've been around since God said, "Let there be light"
By Robert Wernick, illustrations by Rowan Barnes-Murphy

66 Camp meetings keep 'em in the fold
Old-time religion, shared values and simple pleasures unite kith and kin at these annual rustic retreats
By Bonnie Angelo, photographs by Lauren Greenfield

76 Artrain: a museum that's right on track
Established to bring art to the people of Michigan, this gallery-on-rails now visits towns all over the country
By Constance Bond, photographs by Kelly Culpepper

82 'Po-ta-to, po-ta-to—Hey, that's potato!'
For an adult, just as for kids, learning to read can be a frustrating experience—but also immensely satisfying
By Richard Wolkomir, photographs by Sue Owrutsky

Raphael Bravo, Irving, Texas.

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Smithsonian *departments*

August 1996
Volume 27, Number 5

Cover

Cover:
Al Diamond, a climbing guide, hangs tough near the top of Twilight Zone, a 5.12 (expert) route in New York's Shawangunk Mountains. Liza Schwartz, a student at SUNY New Paltz, acts as belayer. The rope is secured by slings, with carabiners, fastened to "protection"—hardware wedged into the rock (p. 30)
Photograph by James Balog

12 *Letters to the Editor*
94 *Picture Credits*
95 *150th Birthday Bash*
97 *Additional Sources*
98 *Smithsonian Study Tours and Seminars*

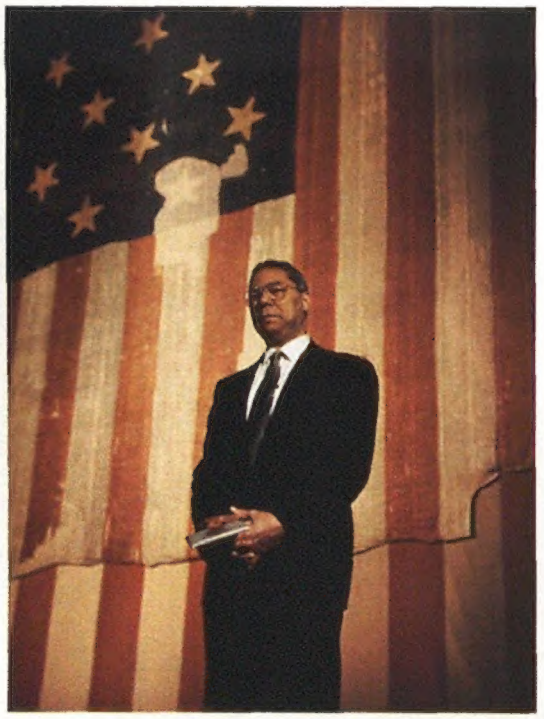
10 Smithsonian Perspectives
The Smithsonian has always had a global focus, because butterflies and art movements know no boundaries
By Secretary Heyman

14 Around the Mall and Beyond
Celebrity-hosted "Smithsonian Minutes," and a bell for the clock tower, commemorate the Institution's 150th year
By Michael Kernan

18 Smithsonian Highlights: a calendar of events
20 *Highlights Continued:* "Artists at Work: A Smithsonian Celebration of Staff Creativity" (S. Dillon Ripley Center, International Gallery, through August 11)

92 Book Reviews
A Schoolteacher in Old Alaska: The story of Hannah Breece, edited by Jane Jacobs
William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic by Alan Taylor

100 When I said I wanted to be wanted for my body . . .
By Richard Conniff



14

100

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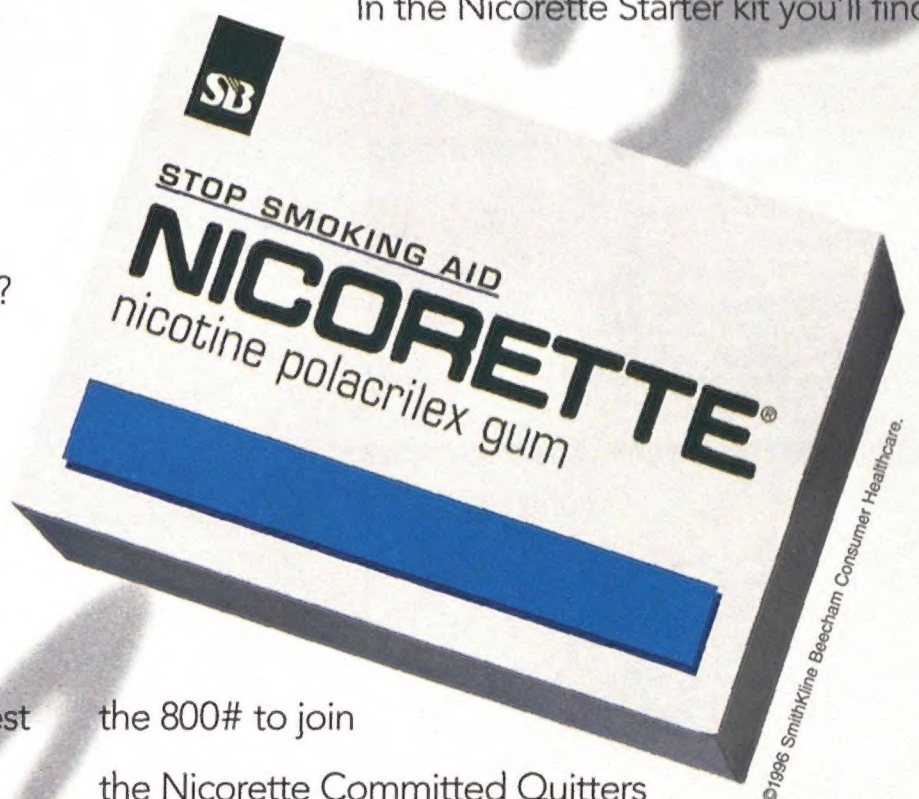

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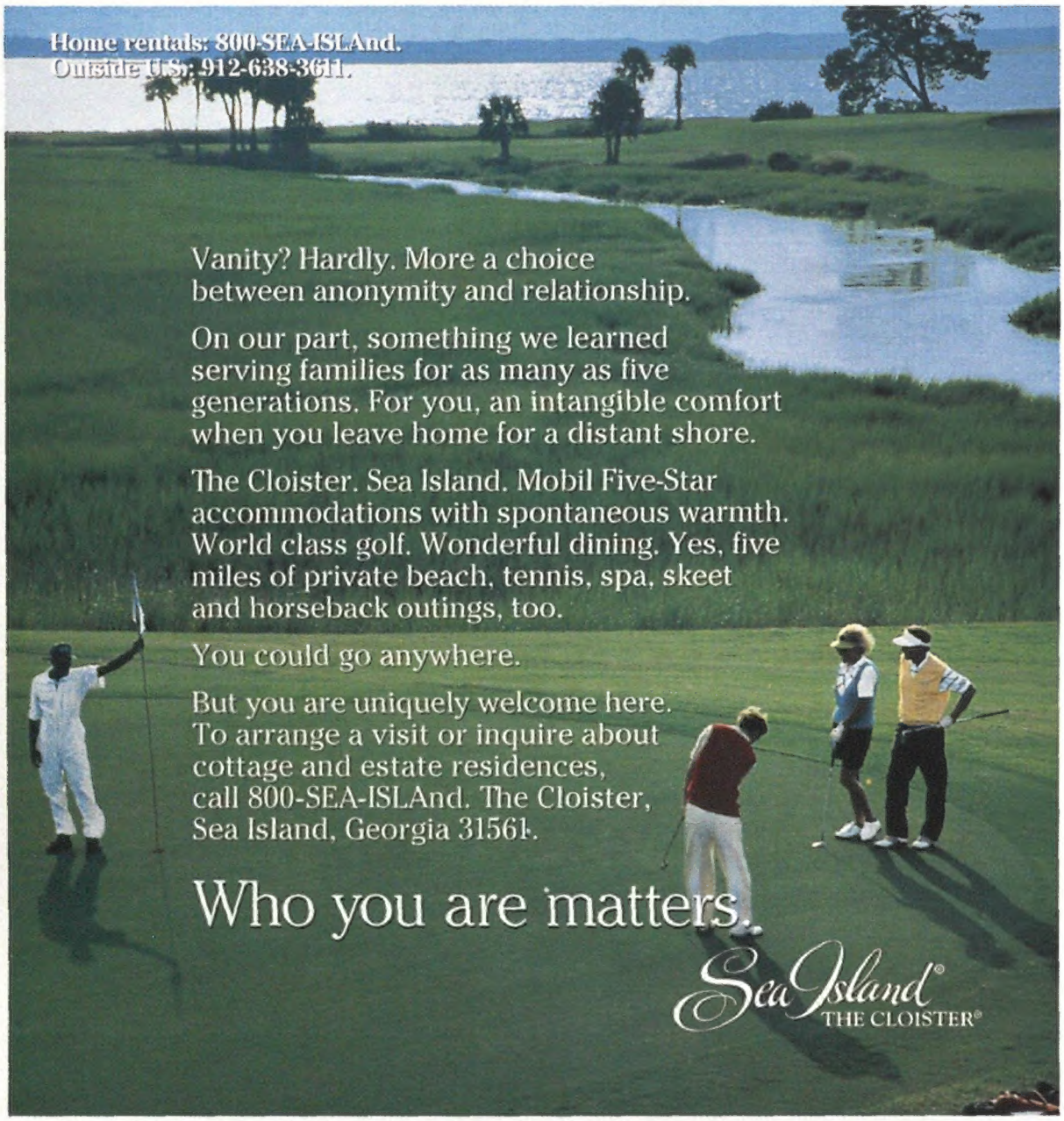
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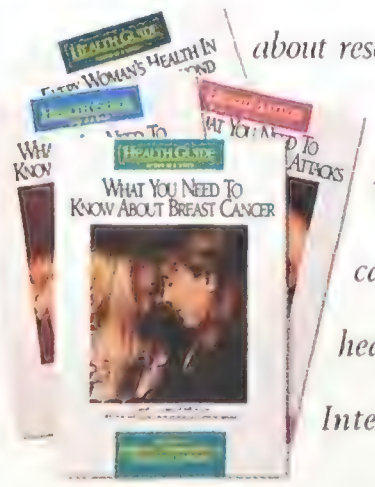

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Secretary Heyman's comments

Smithsonian Perspectives

150 1846–1996 Smithsonian

From its start, the Smithsonian had international interests, and it is now more than ever a global institution

As a Californian transplanted to Washington, and as a lawyer working in an institution dominated by scientists and historians, I confess I occasionally feel a bit like a foreigner here at the Smithsonian. During the Smithsonian's 150th anniversary celebration this year, I find myself thinking about our institution's namesake and founder, James Smithson, who apparently also felt himself something of an outsider.

Smithson was born the illegitimate son of the future Duke of Northumberland, and he was evidently never entirely at home in English society. Though a natural scientist of some renown in Britain, he spent a large portion of his life as an expatriate on the Continent. He never visited any part of the United States, but he pointedly specified in his will that his estate should be devoted to the establishment of an institution, *in Washington,* for "the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men."

Today, we are inclined to interpret the phrase "among men" as a somewhat archaic way of referring to all humankind. For Joseph Henry, the first Secretary of the Smithsonian, these two words directed him to found a "cosmopolitan establishment." In Henry's opinion, to limit its scope "to one city, or even to one country," would be "an invidious restriction" of the terms of Smithson's bequest.

From its beginning, then, the Smithsonian was to be an international organization as well as a national one. Over a century and a half, the Smithsonian has continued to pursue its dual mandate in both arenas of "increase and diffusion."

Contributing to the "increase" of knowledge are the Smithsonian's foreign research activities and exchanges. Some of the earliest collections of the National Museum were formed before the establishment of the Smithsonian, with materials assembled by the 1838-42 United States Exploring Expedition under U.S. Navy Lieut. Charles Wilkes. Since then, the Smithsonian has received objects from other expeditions and agencies, but most come from its staff members, who have traveled to almost every country of the world to conduct research and collect specimens. This international focus is both a result of, and a reason for, the distinctive collections-based nature of much Smithsonian research. Butterflies, spider plants, geologic strata and art movements all ignore national boundaries, and a global viewpoint is almost demanded if one is to study them properly. Most of our traveling researchers work in cooperation with local counterpart scholars and organizations overseas, sharing costs and specimens and providing training for younger collaborators. In addition to our own travelers, we maintain a number of staff members at permanent research sites abroad, notably at the four major research stations of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama.

Smithsonian collections are available for study by foreign scholars visiting Smithsonian facilities here, at other institutions where we lend materials for study or exhibition, and also increasingly by electronic means. Each year 20-30 percent of our resident fellows are distinguished researchers from other countries. We believe that this representation is crucial, because the community of scholars is now a global one, and we cannot maintain our important stature as a museum and research organization without these international connections.

Our channel for the international "diffusion" of knowledge is more familiar to the public. Ever since the great expositions of the 19th century, the Smithsonian has been known not only for scholarly publications but for public exhibitions on cultures and natural environments around the world. Our institution has also provided a new home for some of the first public museums in this country devoted to Asian and African art. We have attempted to make our collections and exhibitions accessible to the millions of people who are not able to travel to our facilities overseas or here in Washington. We have done this through loans and traveling exhibitions (such as "America's Smithsonian," currently touring the United States, and "The Smithsonian's America," recently on view in Japan), and through the Smithsonian's Internet website, one of the most visited of its order in the world.

Countless other international programs deserve mention, including our films, television and radio programs, international symposia and seminars, the lectures, performances and travel programs of our Smithsonian Associates and articles in SMITHSONIAN magazine. Our annual Folklife Festival features demonstrations and performances of various living cultural traditions from our own immigrant communities and from abroad.

While the American people might well take pride in this remarkable institution, it is important to recognize that the Smithsonian's work and its collections are maintained for—and with the help of—people from all over the world. To limit the Smithsonian to just this country would be an "invidious restriction" of the will of James Smithson—a foreigner in his own land who established a global institution in ours.

I. Michael Heyman

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Letters to the Editor

Reno

Robert Wernick's June article on Reno, Nevada's history as divorce capital answered a family mystery for me. The British earl Christian Arthur Wellesley, Lord Cowley (related to the Duke of Wellington's line), traveled directly to Reno in the 1930s. He loved the area, remained here, married and became a prominent local citizen. Until I read your article, however, I never knew why he picked Reno: Lord Cowley left England and his first wife for a quicky divorce.

Wellesley died in 1962, and his son Garrett, who is married to my aunt Paige, inherited the noble title in 1975. The new Lord Cowley, Aunt Paige and their children packed up and emigrated to England in the 1980s. He is known in the British House of Lords as the "Nevada Cowboy."

J.D. Deming
Reno, Nevada

Think Tank

The article by Bil Gilbert on the National Zoological Park's Think Tank for orangutans made me wonder about priorities. With funding for education at a premium, the $4 million spent for the construction of the facility, plus the annual expenditures for staff, research and maintenance, could be better used if allocated to educate our nation's illiterate citizens.

Joseph C. Fiege
Gulf Breeze, Florida

The natives of Borneo have long believed that the "Man of the Forest," the orangutan, knows how to talk but wisely doesn't, thinking that if he did, he would be put to work.

James Stayton
Eureka, California

I am one of those people who has long been of the opinion that animals do think. Our neighbors had a cocker spaniel who loved to retrieve her blue ball. "Sooty" often came over to our yard and I'd ask her, "Where's your ball?" She would cock her head to one side and stare off into space, just as many people do when thinking. After several seconds she would dash off in a straight line to her ball and bring it back to me. She did not run around searching; she recalled precisely where it was and went directly to it.

John R. Wilson
Camcenton, Missouri

James Cutler

As a forester, I read Nancy Shute's article about architect James Cutler with a sense of pride and skepticism. While Cutler avows the "beauty and utility" of wood, the story only subtly—with references to second growth—conceded the renewability of our timber resources.

By repeated references to the "saving" of trees, the article inspires the well-meaning but scientifically unfounded ecological shamanism that has caused the demise of many communities in the Pacific Northwest and added thousands of dollars to the cost of the average family home. At best we can only conserve our forest resources, including the trees that Cutler and the Paulks left standing "within inches of the walls." Those trees will eventually decompose around the walls of that two-bedroom retreat.

While Bill Gates is certainly within his rights to seat 100 for dinner and have private movie screenings in his new Cutler-designed home, maybe our real environmental problem is simply our egos. Until we learn both to revere our resources and use them with moderation and common sense, all our other efforts will only serve as monuments to our human conceits.

Butch Crain
Arcadia, Louisiana

Valmeyer

Bruce Watson's article about Valmeyer, Illinois, reminded me of the January 1937 flood of the Wabash and the Ohio rivers. The 61-foot levee at Shawneetown, Illinois, wasn't up to the task of handling the 65-foot flood. When the waters receded and things dried out, some of the residents looked to their 100-plus-year, tried-and-true method of protecting the town: raise the levee 2 feet above the last flood stage to 67 feet. Cooler heads suggested moving the town west. By late 1941, some 1,600 residents, many commercial establishments and the county courthouse had moved three miles to a new Shawneetown site with a low point 20 feet above the last flood. About 400 residents rebuilt in what is now called Old Shawneetown.

I was encouraged to read that FEMA will no longer help flood victims to rebuild on the same site since it makes economic sense to move on, or up.

Richard J. Kuklentz
Charlotte, North Carolina

Fencing

For years my friends and I have gotten together for "movie night," and we particularly enjoy any film having any kind of horseplay. We watch them not for Errol Flynn, whom we feel couldn't have fenced his way out of a large paper bag, but for our hero, Basil Rathbone, who often played opposite Flynn as the heavy.

As a child in England's public schools, Rathbone took up the sport and thereafter was an avid fencer, becoming one of Hollywood's best. The sad thing is he had to lose to Errol Flynn, and he had to do it on film to be recorded for all time.

J. Carlos Salazar
Hayward, California

Richard Wolkomir's article on fencing refers to Darth Vader as a space alien. He was just a man in a helmet, as we learned in the final scenes of *Return of the Jedi.*

Claire Horn
New York City, New York

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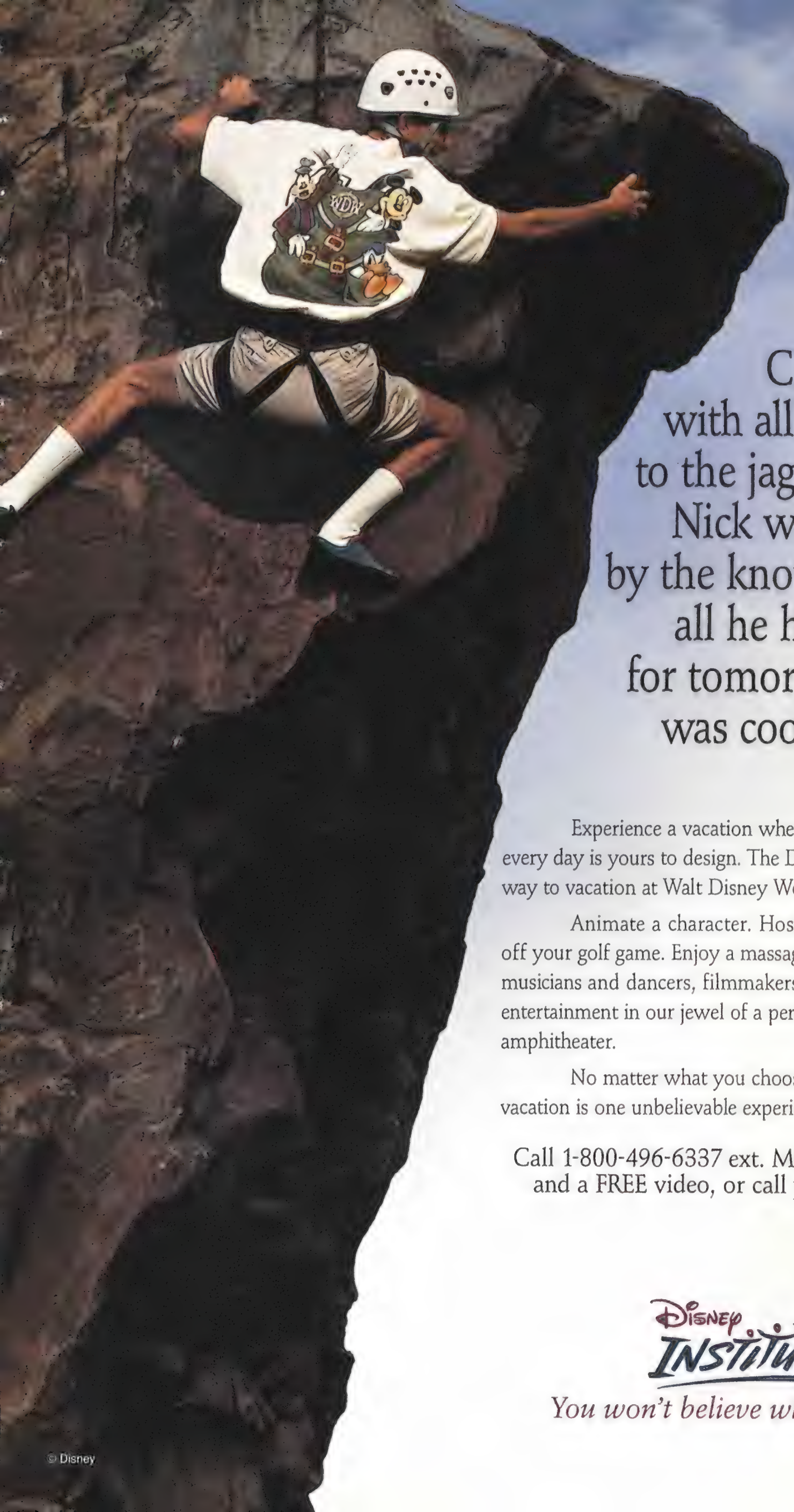

Clinging
with all his strength
to the jagged rock,
Nick was comforted
by the knowledge that
all he had scheduled
for tomorrow
was cooking class.

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Around the Mall and Beyond

By Michael Kernan

Every belfry must have its bell, and what better time than noon on August 10, the Smithsonian Institution's 150th birthday, to hoist one up to the Castle clock tower and ring out the hour?

After casting two bells for churches in Jamaica and Georgia, workmen at London's Whitechapel Bell Foundry pour molten bronze to make the Smithsonian bell.

We know more about the bell's future than we do about our own: after being wheeled out of the old Children's Room in the Smithsonian Castle at precisely 11:45 A.M. on August 10, it will be hoisted up to the clock tower, where at the stroke of noon it will denote the hour by bonging 12 times in D flat.

It was supposed to bong in A sharp, but after casting, the bell seemed to "want" D flat. Knowing their craft well, the tuners at the foundry went along.

In a minute I will get into why there is a Castle here, with crenellated towers and owls and everything. But first I have to say something about the bell and why it will bong on August 10.

As it happens, August 10, 1846, was the day, 150 years ago, that Congress established the Smithsonian Institution.

The Sesquicentennial Bell was cast by the Whitechapel Bell Foundry of London, which also cast the first Liberty Bell, Big Ben and the New York Stock Market bell. The firm has been going for 576 years.

The idea for a Castle bell seems to go back to the 1847 plans by architect James Renwick, envisioning "a campanile or bell tower" and calling for four clock dials to be carved into the stone flanks of that tower more than a century before actual clockworks were installed in the late 1960s.

Serendipitously, David Shayt at the National Museum of American History, who studies the history of bell and clock towers, among other things, suggested in 1994 that the Sesquicentennial might be the perfect occasion for the Castle to receive its bell. The $40,000 bell is a gift of the A. T. Cross Company, which by remarkable coincidence is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year, too.

Last fall the great bronze bell, 27 inches high, 34 inches in diameter and 821 pounds in weight not including its steel frame, was cast, tuned and shipped to the Port of New York. At the unveiling on January 29, the Washington Ringing Society, whose handbells were cast by the same foundry, chimed out the good news.

The bell itself will not swing but will receive the blows of an electromagnetically inspired clapper. Of course the people who work in the building were asked if they would object. They said probably not, considering that they had not heard it yet. Some even welcomed the ponderous tolling of the hour as an aid to ending particularly dull meetings.

When I was shown the bell by Richard Stamm, the Keeper of the Castle, the first thing I did was reach out to touch it. That is in my nature as a reporter.

"Uh oh," Stamm said. "I wouldn't. It's covered in graphite, and people get it all over their hands."

Well, all right. So I kept my distance to read the inscription ("for the increase and diffusion of knowledge . . .") and to imagine the thing being trundled out the south door and lifted by a 200-foot hydraulic crane 12 stories up to the clock tower roof.

The clock dials, four stories below, are being fitted with new hands to look more British Victorian and less French. In fact "Victorian" is the key word at the good old Smithsonian Castle, a building so beloved that it now appears on the Institution's stationery. The Regents wanted a design in the romantic medieval style so popular at the time

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specifically a style more academic than churchly, rather like the towers of Christ Church College at Oxford University.

The changes in our two-winged, many-turreted Castle over the years are too numerous to list. They have followed the needs of the times as other Smithsonian buildings have taken over certain functions. The chemical labs and lecture rooms, for instance, went elsewhere as did the "apparatus room."

Joseph Henry, the first Secretary, actually lived here with his wife, Mary, and their three daughters in a ten-room suite. Archival photographs show the music room and parlor, study and art studio, and elegant bedrooms, including the melancholy scene of Henry's death room, with chairs grouped around the bed and medicine bottles on the table. I even located, atop a cabinet, the bust of George Washington that fell on Mary's head one day and broke her nose. Today the bedrooms are part of the second-story offices of the Secretary.

The main part of the Castle (now the Great Hall and Visitor Reception Center and, upstairs, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars) was once a classic 19th-century museum. Dominated by a 20-foot-high hadrosaur skeleton (inaccurately assembled, it turned out), the place was crammed with case after case of wildlife specimens, rare rocks, mummies, "cannibal cooking pots" from the Fijis and live snakes from New Jersey.

The west wing was a library with great vaulted ceilings and rows of busts along the walls. Later it was a graphic arts studio and gallery, but today it is a staff and Contributing Member dining hall called the Commons, a name that is supposed to conjure up the ivied towers and high tables of academe. On the walls are 12 coats of arms of famous Britons from Shakespeare and Chaucer to Drake and Darwin. In my quick tour with Rick Stamm, I wanted most of all to go up the spiral staircases into the towers. As does everyone, apparently. There are so many legends.

The South Tower is the site of the Regents Room with its wonderful conference table and a few of the original high-backed chairs that weren't burned in the Great Fire of 1865. When Queen Elizabeth II visited here in the '70s, she had lunch in this room with Vice President Nelson Rockefeller and others. Because she is short, her chair was set

In a "Smithsonian Minute," Colin Powell explains that souvenir pieces were taken from the Star Spangled Banner.

on a dais so that her head wouldn't be lower than Rockefeller's at table. But Rockefeller, serene in his sense of personal entitlement and importance, went straight to the elevated chair and sat in it, dwarfing the queen.

In this room, too, Joseph Henry held a séance in 1868 to debunk the claims of spiritualists. Perhaps this is what spawned all the tales about the building's being haunted. Indeed, the *Washington Post* for May 13, 1900, averred that "guarded footsteps traverse the lonely corridors, made by unseen feet, and husky voices break the night stillness." Supposedly, Henry's ghost still roams the halls.

The North Tower, the tall, octagonal clock tower, is the one from which Mary Henry—and possibly President Lincoln—used to check out the Confederate flags flying over Virginia, just across the Potomac River. Before the fire of '65, the reclusive paleontologist Fielding Meek lived under the stairs in a tiny room with his cat, as he explained, "all the family I have."

The West Tower is a narrow spire where a couple of owls, named Increase and Diffusion after the Smithsonian motto, lived in the 1970s. Secretary Dillon Ripley hoped to establish a line of owls there permanently, following an old tradition, and for several years the staff took turns climbing up to leave them dead rats. But they took off anyway. "There was also an attempt to raise falcons in the South Tower," Stamm said, "and for a summer we had two students there observing them. They flew the coop, too, although I'm told that falcons still come to take a look around."

The past is much with us here. Smithson's bones lie in the Crypt Room in a fantastic marble urn. When the remains were exhumed to move them here, the great bone detective Lawrence Angel examined them and pronounced Smithson "a small man with bad teeth who smoked a pipe and was probably a fencer."

No doubt Smithson would be fascinated to see his bequest being realized this 150th anniversary year via the "Smithsonian Minutes" on TV. By now, practically everybody in the country must have seen at least one. There are 33 of them, produced by Jay Kernis for CBS. It was Kernis who selected the items from Jonas Salk's polio vaccine vials to the Star Spangled Banner, from the original gold nugget discovered at Sutter's Mill to an early Edison light bulb from the Woolworth's sit-in counter to Irving Berlin's piano.

And it was Kernis who not only found the celebrities to present these items but wrote the text. Sometimes he had to speed up the readers to make his minute; sometimes, as with Maya Angelou, they had to read it their own way so Kernis edited out a sentence or two. Most of the recording sessions took but 15 minutes, though Robin Williams kept the crew doubled up with laughter as he did his lines for Einstein's pipe in a plummy German accent.

"I must have looked at over 10,000 objects," Kernis says. "The big surprise was what the celebrities chose to work with. Jimmy Carter wanted the Salk vaccine. Carly Simon picked Ben Franklin's first postal rate chart, for Franklin was a hero of her mother's. Miss Piggy refuses to appear with a puppet, so we could not have her present Charlie McCarthy. But she did accept Clark Gable's World War II uniform." Kermit the Frog did, however, agree to present the Teddy bear named after Theodore Roosevelt. It was flown to California for the shoot in its own seat.

History on the hoof: in these "Minutes" we've also seen Colin Powell, Bette Midler, Barbara Bush, Sandra Day O'Connor, Anthony Hopkins and the Rev. Jesse Jackson. Who else can better show us an icon than another icon?

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Smithsonian Highlights

Plan a Smithsonian visit in 1996!

Join in the fun as the Smithsonian celebrates its 150th anniversary with a year of special exhibitions and events. *Receive a free Associates' planning packet.* Write Smithsonian Information, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560, or call 202-357-2700 (voice) or 202-357-1729 (TTY), 9 A.M. - 5 P.M., Monday-Friday; 10 A.M. - 4 P.M., Saturday-Sunday. *Note:* Parking near the Smithsonian is limited. The Metrorail subway, convenient to all museums, has parking available at some stations (details in packet). Begin your visit at the Smithsonian Information Center's Associates' Reception Desk—open 9 A.M. - 4 P.M. daily—in the Castle.

Smithsonian museums are generally open 10 A.M. - 5:30 P.M. daily, except December 25. Hours at the National Zoo are 9 A.M. - 4:30 P.M. daily for buildings, and 8 A.M. - 8 P.M. for grounds.

Art Night on the Mall
The Freer and Sackler galleries, the Hirshhorn and African Art museums and the Ripley Center's International Gallery will be open Thursday evenings until 8 P.M. through August 29.

Happy Birthday, Smithsonian!
The Smithsonian's Birthday Party on the Mall will be held August 10 and 11. For details, see page 95.

'America's Smithsonian'
Rhode Island Convention Center, Providence, Rhode Island (August 21-September 19) Centerpiece of the Institution's 150th-anniversary celebration, the traveling exhibition showcases such Smithsonian treasures as George Washington's sword and a 1948 Tucker sedan. *Note:* Admission is free, but passes are required. Advance passes are available for a service fee of $3.50 each by calling 1-800-913-TOUR.

Special August Exhibits, Events

S. Dillon Ripley Center, International Gallery
Artists at Work: A Smithsonian Celebration of Staff Creativity (through August 11) Artwork by members of the Smithsonian staff. See *Highlights Continued*, page 20.
Rotunda Gallery
Picturing Natural History (through August 25) Works by members of the Guild of Natural Science Illustrators.

The Castle—Great Hall
Smithson's Gift New permanent display tells the story of the British scientist whose bequest founded the Smithsonian 150 years ago.

National Air and Space Museum
The Enola Gay (runs indefinitely) Exhibition features the forward fuselage of the *Enola Gay,* the B-29 that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.
Cosmic Voyage (opens August 9) New Imax film takes viewers on a journey through the known dimensions of the Universe.

National Museum of Natural History
Eyes on Science: Illustrating Natural History (through January 1, 1997) The contribution of artists to scientific research.
Gems and Minerals Hall Gallery is closed for renovation until late 1997. The famous Hope Diamond is on view on the second floor of the Rotunda.

National Zoological Park
Think Tank New permanent exhibition explores the biology and evolution of animal thinking.

National Museum of American History
Richard Avedon: Kennedy Family Photographs (opens August 3) Four large photographs are complemented by a film clip of a CBS "Smithsonian Minute" featuring Anthony Hopkins.
Smithsonian Institution Staff Photo Contest Winners (through September 3) Results of an institution-wide contest.
From Smithson to Smithsonian: The Birth of an Institution (through January 5, 1997) Exhibition includes Smithson's own books; engravings and photographs.

National Postal Museum
Located next to Union Station on Capitol Hill, the museum tracks the history of the nation's mail service.

National Portrait Gallery
1846: Portrait of the Nation (through August 18) Exhibition focuses on 1846, the Smithsonian's founding year.

National Museum of American Art
The Art of Thomas Wilmer Dewing: Beauty Reconfigured (through October 14) Paintings by one of the most important artists of the Gilded Age.

Renwick Gallery
American Crafts: The Nation's Collection (runs indefinitely) Selection of 19th- and 20th-century crafts.

Freer Gallery of Art
In Human Form: Images of the Secular and Divine in Chinese Painting (through September 2) Works from the 11th to the 18th century.

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
Traders and Raiders on China's Northern Frontier (through September 2) Artifacts from the first millennium B.C.

National Museum of African Art
Crowning Achievements: African Arts of Dressing the Head (through August 18) Traditional and contemporary hats, headdresses and hairstyles.

Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden
Distemper: Dissonant Themes in the Art of the 1990s (through September 15) Paintings and sculptures by ten internationally based artists.

Arts and Industries Building
Stories of the People (August 10-August 10, 1997) Exhibition presented by the National Museum of the American Indian features 200 artifacts.

Anacostia Museum
Footsteps from North Brentwood (through August 31) Exhibition takes a look at the first town in Prince George's County, Maryland, to be incorporated by African-American citizens.

Heye Center, National Museum of the American Indian (New York City)
All Roads Are Good: Native Voices on Life and Culture (through February 1, 1998) Some 300 objects illustrate the diversity and continuity of Native cultures.

Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum (New York City)
Gallery Reopening The exhibition galleries of the museum will reopen to the public as of September 17.

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Highlights Continued

A singular showcase of art

What do a hat made out of crackers, a photograph of an environmental sculpture, a self-portrait as a Shaker table and a rocking chair built for two have in common? They are all part of a new exhibition that showcases the art of members of the Smithsonian staff. Held in celebration of the Institution's 150th anniversary, "Artists at Work" highlights the creativity and artistic versatility of Smithsonian employees. On view at the Ripley Center's International Gallery through August 11, the juried show features paintings, sculptures, photographs, fiber art, ceramics and furniture.

One thing all Smithsonian artists share—whether exhibition designers or security officers, illustrators or administrators—is the singular opportunity to study and be influenced by some of the finest work in the museum field. The artists represented in the show stress the importance of this working milieu. Many also reflect that the most difficult part of managing two careers is time—there's never enough.

"Since the Institution's founding in 1846, Smithsonian artists have used their creative abilities in the service of science, art and research," says Anne Gossett, director of the International Gallery. "The tradition of Smithsonian artists working in their own studios is equally strong. This rich and varied sampling of works by our talented colleagues is a vital part of the celebration of the Smithsonian's history."
Diane M. Bolz

Self-Portrait As A Shaker Table, Michèle Buhrman Colburn, Hirshhorn Museum

Flight into Egypt (detail), Mathew Weaver, Cooper-Hewitt Museum

Mr. Harris with a Broken Leg, Liza Kirwin, Archives of American Art

Judy and the Opera Singer (detail), John Clendening, Air and Space Museum

Dimanche (color xerograph of a cut-paper collage), Denise E. Dougherty, Museum of American Art

all it ironic. That a place dedicated to re-creating the past should invent a new way to experience it every day. But that's what you'll find here at Colonial Williamsburg. Where every week of every year is newly devised to challenge, provoke, surprise. One day, you might happen upon the 1776 debates of the Virginia Convention. Or find yourself embroiled in Virginia's protest against the closing of the port of Boston. Another morning, you might wake up in a town under British martial law.

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USA

The Smithsonian Time Machine

When we asked a number of Americans notable in their fields what moment from the past they would like to visit if we could magically provide the means of transport, their answers, starting with President Clinton's, ranged as far back as 3,500 million years ago to a time as recent as the early years of Louis Armstrong, who died in 1971. The Smithsonian Institution, of course, has been in business for only 150 years, but during that time its scientists and curators have been busy studying and measuring and collecting in the natural sciences, art and history, so that the Institution has become what amounts to the custodian of America's common heritage. That let us illustrate the individual moments from the past that people chose to drop in on with matching items from one Smithsonian collection or another. They range from the compass used by the Lewis and Clark expedition (below), to a specimen godwit collected by Charles Darwin, to fossil algae from the Precambrian era.

National Museum of American History

President Bill Clinton

"In August 1805 Meriwether Lewis was climbing a ridge to become the first United States citizen to reach the Continental Divide. That's a moment I wish I could have experienced. Lewis expected a vast plain on the other side, with a river like the Missouri flowing to the sea. Instead there were mountains as far as he could see—and many of them were topped with snow. At that moment, collective contemporary wisdom about the continent's geography went out the window.

"For Lewis it must have been a tremendous shock—his potential triumph suddenly turned into the strong possibility of failure. But he kept going.

"Lewis and Clark's journey is full of examples of refusing to give up. Their expedition embodies the American spirit of pushing forward, of expanding our horizons and taking on new challenges.

"They represent several other remarkable things, too. While there was never any question that the two men were ultimately in charge, in several important moments they involved the rest of the expedition in decision making. When the expedition finally reached the Pacific, for example, they had to decide where to spend the winter, a crucial decision. But the whole expedition voted on the issue, including an African-American slave—six decades before blacks were emancipated and enfranchised. So did an Indian woman, more than a century before Native Americans and women were granted the right to vote.

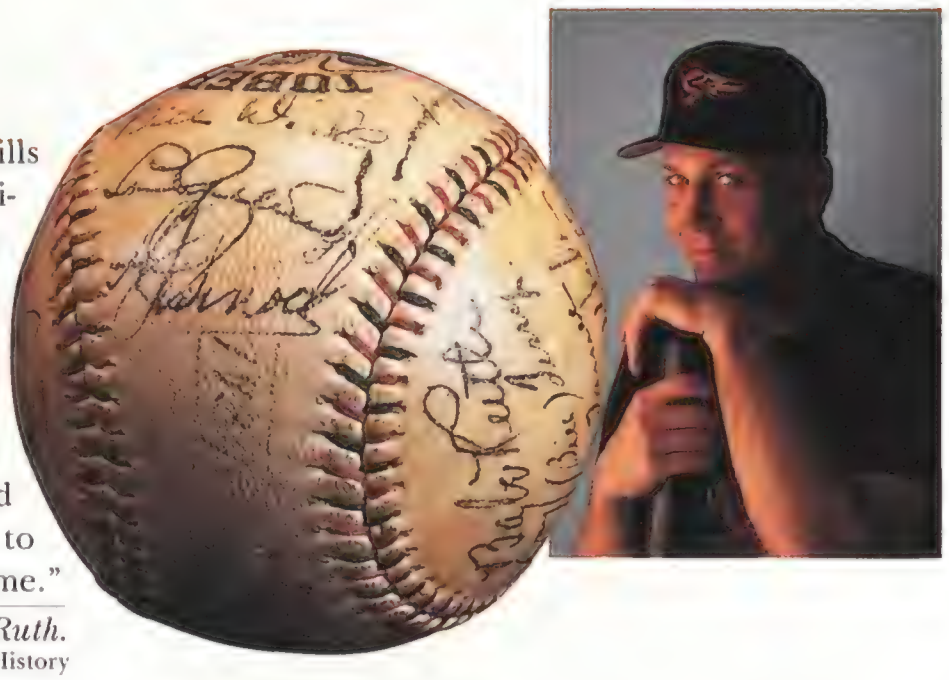
"Part of the lesson, I think, is that there's nothing Americans can't accomplish when we turn toward a common goal and each person's talents are tapped. That's as true today as when Lewis and Clark crossed the continent."

Cal Ripken Jr.

Shortstop

"I would like to see what would happen if I could use my skills playing back in Lou Gehrig's time, when the Yankees dominated baseball. Old-timers say the game was better then. Modern players say we're better now, more specialized, and the players are bigger and faster and stronger.

"In a way it makes no sense to compare players then and now. But I'd like to know what went on inside Gehrig's head. I know what went on in mine when I broke his record for consecutive games played. He was a great hitter and I'm not, and we play different positions. Still, I'd like to think we share the same approach to baseball. It's a team game."



Yankee baseball signed by (among others) Lou Gehrig and Babe Ruth.
National Museum of American History

Andrew Wyeth

Painter

"I was born in Chadds Ford. I live here still and have painted all around where the Battle of Brandywine Creek took place. The moment in history I would visit came on September 10, 1777. It was the evening before the battle. Lafayette, who at 19 had just been made a major general by the Continental Congress, joined Washington's army for the first time.

"Lafayette represented hope for the Colonies—the hope of French intervention on our side. The war was at a low point. Washington explained his tactics for the battle next day and went over the plight the Colonies were in. The two men surveyed what would be the field of battle, then talked far into the night. Apparently they laid the basis for a lifelong friendship; they eventually became almost like father and son.

"Washington lost the battle and it turns out that he might have been killed at Brandywine, too. A British officer, Capt. Patrick Ferguson, had invented a remarkable breech-loading rifle. Before the battle he saw Washington on horseback and could have shot him, but didn't—I believe from fear of giving away his own position."

More than 100 of Ferguson's remarkable rifles were made; only a few are left.
National Museum of American History

Maya Lin

Artist

"Even my earliest work was influenced by geology and topology. I saw the Vietnam Veterans Memorial not as an object placed into the earth but as a cut in the earth that has then been polished, like a geode. Interest in the land and concern about how we are polluting the air and water of the planet are what make me want to travel back in geologic time—to witness the shaping of the earth before man.

"I'd also like to have seen North America prior to the arrival of the Western European settlers—the effigy mounds of Indians and the abundance of Great Plains bison and antelope. Pollution has lost us the simple clarity of the air—I have read that 300 years ago, from New York looking west you could see a phenomenal distance. Not today."

Decorated elkhide combines a Shoshoni buffalo hunt and wolf dance.
National Museum of the American Indian

Bill Gates

Microsoft CEO

"My first stop on this time-travel expedition would be the Bell Labs in December 1947 to witness the invention of the transistor." Bell's William Shockley, John Bardeen and Walter Brattain worked it out. At first the public paid little attention. "It was a key transitional event in the advent of the Information Age. It supplanted the vacuum tube and enabled the concept of electronic devices on a personal scale. Some of us still remember how cool it felt to be able to carry your own transistor radio around and listen to whatever music you wanted, wherever you were! Transistors became largely outmoded with the invention of the integrated circuit in the late '60s. Still, without the invention of the transistor, I'm quite sure that the PC would not exist as we know it today."

Specially built amplifier, used in the invention of the transistor, was given to NMAH by Walter Brattain.
National Museum of American History

Wynton Marsalis

Trumpeter/Composer

"The day the Civil War ended, that's what I would have liked to see. After all those years fighting, the slaves were free, but not just the slaves—all the people North and South, black and white." But as a great trumpeter who plays jazz and classics, Marsalis figures he would most want to see and talk to "Pops" (Louis Armstrong): "I grew up in New Orleans, too, but I never met him or heard him in person, but my dad, who is a piano player, knew him. He was the greatest. Growing up we didn't appreciate the history of jazz as much as we should have."

Sample 78 rpm jazz classics by Louis Armstrong.
Smithsonian Center for Folklife Programs and Cultural Studies Archives

Lynn Margulis

Archeo-bacteriologist

"You have the Warrawoona stromatolite [solidified algae] from Western Australia on display in your "Archean Age" exhibit at the National Museum of Natural History. Some would say it's the oldest evidence of life on earth. What I wish is to be able, like Alice in Wonderland, to step through the looking glass into the scene and spy on life 3,500 million years ago. With microscopic eyes, I would watch that stromatolite take shape and grow.

"Did the landscape in Western Australia swell with microbial mats like those from Matanzas, Cuba, today? How many years passed before this layered sample of rock grew to this size? Why and how did it harden? Was oxygen bubbling into the air by then? Was oxygen used up so quickly by respiring microbes that it never had a chance to accumulate in the atmosphere?"

Fossil of the earliest form of life, algae from 3,500 million years ago, is on permanent display.
National Museum of Natural History

Helen Thomas

Journalist

"I would like to have been a reporter with Apollo 11 when they landed on the moon. That showed just how far the human imagination can take us. John Kennedy wasn't alive to see it happen, but he said we would do it and we did. If I'd been there I like to think that I'd have written something poetic and biblical about it, but I doubt it. I just hope that it would have been something printable.

"When Neil Armstrong stepped on the moon, I jumped sky-high in front of my TV. I just couldn't believe it. The year before, 1968, was so painful, with the loss of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King. But when we reached the moon you felt there might be hope for us all.

"There are all sorts of past moments anybody would like to visit. I'd like to have reported on the American Revolution."

The astronauts used this capsule on the Apollo 11 mission.
National Air and Space Museum

Gary Larson

Cartoonist

"My first stop would probably be the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Second: the Gettysburg Address. Of course a lot of things could end up being anticlimactic—maybe Lincoln had a high squeaky voice and the guy sitting next to me would never shut up.

"It would be fun to be aboard the *Beagle* and see the creatures on the Galapagos Islands with your host Charles Darwin. I could drop some hints, like 'I think an orange would be a natural selection for lunch today.'

"I've always been intrigued by the Dark Ages—though the Smithsonian wasn't there then. I'd like to go back and hang out with some barbarians . . . maybe briefly! I'm not sure if my high school German would cut it. But then you'd probably only have to get just a couple of phrases down, like 'Let's raid that village.'"

Specimen of a Hudsonian godwit bears a tag signed by Charles Darwin in 1837.
National Museum of Natural History

Oscar Hijuelos

Author

"When I traveled in Nepal and Tibet, you could walk the streets of Llasa and hear chanting. My favorite spots in Kathmandu were the little temples where the musicians would gather at night. The Buddhist monks were very kind to me; people have since told me that they probably saw me as an 'old soul.'

"I would like to go back to Tibet in the 12th century when Buddhism was at its height. There were thousands of monasteries then that have been mostly destroyed. And at that time there may well have been an ideally serene society. It would be a wonderful thing to be among people who were certain about their relationship with the world and their religion."

Gilded Tibetan statue of a bodhisattva (enlightened being) was created in the 1300s.
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

Shelby Foote

Civil War Historian

"Picking any one moment or place is a romantic approach to history that I'm uneasy about. Singling out any one event from history as all-important. Every event is led up to by so many others, small and large. Besides, what you think about and where you'd want to go keeps changing.

"Right now I'm thinking a good deal about emancipation. One of our sins was slavery. Another was emancipation. It's a paradox. In theory, emancipation was one of the glories of our democracy—and it was. But the way it was done led to tragedy. Turning four million people loose with no jobs or trades or learning. And then, in 1877, for a few electoral votes, just abandoning them entirely. A huge amount of pain and trouble resulted. Everybody in America is still paying for it.

"It would be nice to talk to Lincoln. He'd really talk to you. Maybe run circles around you. Not like others who you figure would be mostly rhetoric."

In 1865 printmakers sold portraits of Lincoln screened through the proclamation's text.
National Portrait Gallery

Julia Child

Author/Cooking Teacher

"Well, I'd certainly like to go back to the beginning, when the first settlers landed at Plymouth Rock. I've been told there were so many lobsters in New England then that they were used as a kind of trash food!

"I'd like to have headed West in a covered wagon with my grandfather, who started for California in the gold rush of 1849. On the way he bought land in Arkansas for 25 cents an acre and, afterward, grew rice there. He used to tell me about great flocks of birds that darkened the sky over his farm each fall."

This flattened, button-size nugget, found in 1848, set off the California gold rush.
National Museum of American History

E.O. Wilson

Entomologist

"I'm delighted to be asked for my favorite fantasy wish. I'd like to have a few months (years if you'll allow it) to travel through the Hawaiian Islands of around 400 A.D. That was before the first Polynesian voyagers came ashore. Hawaii is the most spectacular far-island laboratory of evolution. So many unique life-forms were lost before being recorded.

"Because I'm an entomologist, I would naturally start looking close up, peering at tree trunks, scratching around in the soil for strange and wonderful insect and other invertebrate species that surely became extinct and left no record when the land was cleared.

"Would you let me collect specimens? Allow me also two companions, a botanist and an ornithologist. Perhaps a camera, too?"

Hawaiian species, some extinct, include plant, snails and a flightless duck (skull).
National Museum of Natural History

Vine Deloria

History Professor/Author

"What I'd really like to do is spend time with the engineers who built the Central Pacific Railroad from Sacramento to Utah. They didn't get started until 1863. It took six years of digging and blasting and killing workers to complete 600 miles through the worst kind of country. They had to build long bridges, run tunnels for miles through the High Sierras and knock together 40-mile-long sheds to keep 30-foot-deep snow off the tracks.

"How did the engineers do it? Why did they use Chinese workers for some kinds of work and Irish for others? There were a good many Shoshoni along the route. Did they work?

"I would also like to have joined early excavations of the great mound builder burial sites. Objects were recovered whose workmanship and dates (when correctly estimated) can tell us a great deal about early Native American culture."

Mask with antlers, about 600 years old, came from an Oklahoma mound.
National Museum of the American Indian

Anna Deavere Smith

Actress/Author

"The first thing that came to mind was that I'd have loved to be around for the Emancipation Proclamation. And I would like to have known some abolitionists, what their motivations were and what kind of people they were. Nowadays we supposedly share a common culture, but I don't think we really have a common ground—the way they did back then. Going back in time might give us resources that we don't have now.

"I would certainly have liked to meet John Brown. People reported that he had the power to make lynch mobs climb down off their horses and pray in front of him, solely from the power of his gaze. As a performer I would have loved to have seen that. I can't imagine anyone today with that kind of charisma."

Abolitionist John Brown, painted in 1859, just before Brown was hanged near Harpers Ferry.
National Portrait Gallery

Chuck Yeager

Brig. Gen., USAF (ret.)

As America's most famous test pilot for supersonic aircraft, General Yeager has traveled in something close to a time machine himself. But the moment he would like to visit has nothing to do with the sound barrier. "The Battle of Little Bighorn," he says, "on the morning of June 25, 1876."

"It has always been very interesting to me how the Indians really clobbered the Army. So many articles tell how Custer screwed up, dividing his forces, attacking before support came—disobeying orders. I've read about it, but I've never been to Little Bighorn. It would be real interesting to see what really happened and why.

"I'd also like to have seen the meteorite that hit Siberia, in 1908 I think it was. It would be awesome to see something of that force in action."

U.S. cavalry saddle captured at Little Bighorn has stirrups modified to suit Sioux riders.
National Museum of American History

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By David Roberts

The 'Gunks' are a rock climber's dream of a cliffscape paradise

The Shawangunks, a ridge in New York State, is a mecca for climbing enthusiasts who defy gravity using rope, 'protection' and bravado

As I topped the rise on Route 299 at Jenkins-Lueken Orchards, where we used to buy gallons of a Hesperidian cider, an old shiver—three parts exhilaration to one part dread—seized me. There, suddenly, the cliffs of the Shawangunks stretched high above like some wall at the end of the world, insisting that I come to grips with its stern demand.

For the past 50 years the Gunks, as they are known worldwide, have been the most popular rock climbing crag in the East. On these bands of shiny white conglomerate rock, ranging up to 300 feet high, more Americans have learned to dangle from their fingertips above the abyss than anywhere else in the country. I should know: the Gunks were the academy of my mountaineering youth. On a return visit last October, 34 autumns after my first climb in the Gunks, I was beguiled to measure the changes a generation had wrought, and yet to discover how much had stayed the same at my favorite cliffscape in the world.

The Shawangunks amount to a long ridge that serves as a foothill to the Catskill Mountains of central New York State. For a beginning climber, the Gunks are intimidating: so steep is the precipice that every route looks desperate. But a quirk of geology—a consistent 22-degree dip in the sedimentary strata—seams the cliffs with horizontal ledges abounding in perfect, jug-like handholds. Nowhere else in the world are there such easy climbs with such breathtaking exposure.

In the early 1960s, when I first came to the Gunks, the crag was at the cutting edge of the sport of rock climbing. Then as now, the pastime was so arcane that it had its own vocabulary, opaque to outsiders, and its own esoteric codex of ethical behavior. Even to explain the basics—how an ascent unfolds, what to do with the rope and "hardware"—remains an expository challenge.

Thirty years ago, the Gunks scene was dominated by a rowdy, brilliant gang of anarchists called the Vulgarians. Even now, their high jinks remain the stuff of legend. On prime fall and spring weekends stolen from my college education, I gravitated to the periphery of the Vulgarian campfire. Climbing for me, and for all my best friends, was by far the most important thing in life. I took what I learned and then applied it, for 13 straight

Sunrise on the Trapps; the most popular climbing cliff at the Gunks, it has more than 500 listed routes.

Photographs by James Balog

years, to the assault of unclimbed mountains in Alaska.

The old shiver at Jenkins-Lueken, then, was joy at the prospect of testing my nerve, tempered with the knowledge of just how scared I could get up there on the third pitch, 20 feet above the last piton, with my arms turning to jelly and no holds in sight. Now, the rekindled shiver has blurred to a mild tremor, for in my 50s I'm teaching myself to climb again for fun, not training for an Alaskan expedition. It was not "desperates," but "classics"—fine, moderate routes "put up" by the pioneers—that drew me back to the Gunks.

On my first time back on the crag, I climbed Gargoyle, the second route ever established at the Gunks, yet, oddly, one I had never done before. A genuinely moderate route, only a 5.5 on a scale of difficulty that ranges from 5.0 (five-zero) to 5.14 (five-fourteen), Gargoyle nonetheless packs a stunning assortment of weird maneuvers—body-stretching stems, awkward chimney scuttles, overhangs with hidden handholds—into a dead-vertical foray. As one guidebook says, "Who but Fritz Wiessner would pick out such a bold line?"

It was Wiessner, one of the greatest mountaineers in history, who discovered the Gunks for climbers. One afternoon in 1935, as he toiled at an inferior crag near the Hudson River, Wiessner watched a thunderstorm cleanse the sky and saw a precipice gleaming in the northwest. Two weekends later, he made the first ascent of Gargoyle.

The past 30 years have seen rock climbing explode in popularity, graduating from a misunderstood pastime practiced by geeks to the slick stuff of Nike ads. The number of climbers in this country has been estimated to be at least 300,000. There are two glossy, color magazines, *Rock & Ice* and *Climbing*, and construction of indoor climbing gyms is booming, from only three in 1989 to about 500 now. Soon 750 will be open, each with at least 200 members. For climbers incapable of getting up a 5.14, the huge majority, the Gunks remain one of the happiest playgrounds in the United States. On that sunny weekend last October, as I belayed my partner from the top of Gargoyle, some 800 devotees were swarming about the cliffs. (In the '60s, we seldom saw 80 on the most perfect autumn Sunday.)

I discovered that despite the Nike ads, climbing remains little understood by the public. On that beautiful weekend, the area was also teeming with walkers headed up Skytop and its grandiose stone tower built in 1921 to promulgate the most lordly panorama in the Gunks. Upon finding me seated at the top of the cliff, managing the rope, pilgrims asked, "What are you doing?" and "Are you going down?" The top of Gargoyle lies close to

Cragsman David Roberts is widely respected for his early mountaineering feats. His last article, about the Suyá Indians in Brazil, appeared in May.

All in a day's climb (clockwise from above): chalk improves the grip on a hold, taped fingers reduce strain on tendons; a lead climber "comes off" a 5.13 (expert) route, but his rope, held by a belayer, will stop his fall; a climber's forearm is "pumped" from extreme exertion; Liza Schwartz uses a heel hook for support as she reaches for her next handhold.

the exit from the Crevice, a natural fissure splitting the precipice and festooned with wooden ladders that tempt hikers with a good old Victorian scramble. As I sat belaying, a pretty young woman, having been egged up the ladders by her boyfriend, surfaced out of the Crevice, crying, "Now that's sick!" Then she caught sight of me, and of my partner just hauling himself over Gargoyle's lip. "But not as sick as *those* guys," she declared.

During the time since I served my Gunks apprenticeship, rock climbing has been revolutionized. In my day, pitons—metal spikes driven with a hammer into natural cracks in the cliff—formed the only "protection" we could place. The whole trick to climbing is not, as curious bystanders used to ask us, "How do you get the rope up there in the first place?" but rather, how do you place protection, which alone converts the suicidal act of tiptoeing up a precipice on minuscule nubbins into a reasonable game. By threading the rope through a carabiner, or snap-link, attached to a "piece" of protection, the leader reduces the length of any potential fall to a risk worth taking.

Nowadays pieces of protection come in the form of shiny metal "nuts," from penny-width to larger than your fist, that are slotted into cracks, and "Friends," adjustable camming devices that can be stuck into cracks that won't hold nuts. These doodads (which, unlike pitons, do not scar the rock), plus better ropes, gymnast's chalk for fingers and special shoes with sticky rubber soles, have made rock climbing infinitely safer—as well as having upped the standards of difficulty. (For the Vulgarians, 5.10 was the twilight zone: child's play for the youngsters who craft 5.14s today.)

Pushing the limits in an outdoor gym

With all this gadgetry, climbing is now so competitive that to push the ultimate, athletes must play on cliffs so blank and crackless a nut or a Friend can't be placed anywhere. The answer is to drill a string of expansion bolts into the rock, to which hangers are attached, through the eyes of which you clip your carabiners. This reduces the precipice to an outdoor gym, where the only likely consequence of falling is frustration and where difficulty can be pursued for its own sake, divorced from risk and adventure.

When bolts reared their ugly hangers at the Gunks, a great outcry went up, not least from the Vulgarians, the avant-garde of the decade before. By common consensus as well as by law, bolts cannot today be drilled at the Gunks. So the crag that had been at the leading edge became a backwater, while such heretofore obscure cliffs as the New River Gorge in West Virginia and a canyon outside Rifle, Colorado—where almost anything goes, boltwise—have become state of the art.

Fritz Wiessner wouldn't have approved. Late in his

Dick Williams takes the lead on a route called the Dangler as his belayer pays out rope from a secure position. The metal disk on the belayer's harness will provide friction on the rope if Williams falls.

life, but early in mine, I got to know him fairly well, a happenstance I consider among my luckiest. Well into his 80s, Fritz, though hobbled with arthritis, could still climb Gargoyle by moonlight. Back in 1918, on the cliffs near his native Dresden, Fritz had put up the hardest pure rock climbs then accomplished anywhere in the world. After immigrating to the United States in 1929, Wiessner sought out crags all over North America where, characteristically, he not only forged the first routes but blazed the lines that would become the classics.

Throughout the late 1930s, then again after the war, a small band of climbers put up routes at the Gunks. Their leaders were Wiessner and Hans Kraus, an Austrian doctor who had fled the Nazis and come to the United States in 1938. Though both in their 40s, Hans and Fritz, with their rigorous training in the Alps, were probably this country's best rock climbers.

Until his death in March at age 90, Kraus still visited the Gunks, though arthritis had ended his climbing a decade ago. As remarkable a man as Wiessner, Kraus served as President Kennedy's back specialist (not to mention Katharine Hepburn's and Rita Hayworth's).

By the late 1950s, the Shawangunks scene had become stifled by the paternalistic Appalachian Mountain Club. In 1959, after the first climbing fatality at the crag, the Smiley family, who owned the land, considered closing the cliffs to the sport. Hoping to appease the Smileys, the Appies responded by developing a rigid and ultimately ridiculous certification system through which only "qualifying leaders" were allowed to go first on the rope. At their most grandiose, Appie potentates strolled the road below the cliffs ordering unqualified leaders off the routes.

It was in opposition to the Appies that the Vulgarians coalesced. Urban counterculturalists, sprung at first from the City College of New York Outing Club, the Vulgarians thumbed their noses at the Appie-ratus and simply went out and climbed whatever they felt like. Stalwarts such as Dick Williams, Jim McCarthy and Art Gran put up the hardest routes in the Gunks, far beyond the dreams of the bravest Appie, but they also cavorted with a will in their hours off the cliffs.

In effect, the Vulgarians for the first time wed extreme climbing to dropout politics, hallucinogenic sub-

STUDIES SHOW

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Barb Moran-Williams "dynos," propelling herself by swinging or jumping from one handhold to the next.

stances (including limitless pitchers of beer) and sex. Their antics turned the Ivy League men's club that had long ruled American mountaineering on its head. For us neophytes in the early '60s, it was impossible not to gaze on them with awe and envy.

For one thing, in those days when women in the sport were few and far between, at the Gunks the best female climbers (as well as the most desirable) became Vulgarians. They put up their own routes and made the first all-women's ascents of many others.

The Vulgarians delighted in shocking tourists and Appies alike. Directly beneath a highly visible overhang on a route called Shockley's Ceiling (put up in 1953 by Nobel laureate William Shockley), the last hairpin on Route 299 forms a theater for motorists who stop to gawk. To entertain the crowd, Dick Williams led a trio one sunny Saturday on the first nude ascent of Shockley's.

The Vulgarians hung out at two nearby taverns, known as Charlie's (aka the Bavarian Inn) and Emil's (the Mountain Brauhaus). But, as longtime Gunks ranger Thom Scheuer recalls, "When climbers walked into Charlie's, the owner would pull off the tablecloths." No one remembers whether it was this slight or another aggravation (some say a punch-out with local firemen) that one evening provoked Dave Craft, in many respects the shyest of the Vulgarians. Craft ended up on the roof of Charlie's, urinating on customers as they left the pub.

A sophomoric crudeness was the trademark of the Vulgarians, who published their own short-lived yet memorable journal called *Vulgarian Digest* (*V. D.* for short), full of scatological in-jokes and bad photographs of high times in the Tetons and in the Bugaboos in British Columbia. Even when they blundered, the Vulgarians blundered with style. One memorable "epic" ensued when a member who had a talent for epics got benighted in fog, high up on a long route. Rappelling off in the dark, he lost track of his whereabouts. Thinking himself on the Grand Traverse Ledge, with a 200-foot abyss below, he belayed his party on a hypervigilant crawl across the carriage road, where on sunny days graybeards take leisurely strolls with their dogs.

The great thing about the Vulgarians, as we acolytes learned, was that they demonstrated that climbing was not some stern school of character but a hedonistic romp in the Grand Guignol of the good life. They had not a trace of snobbery about them. As the gang's historian and panegyrist Joe Kelsey reminisced a few years ago in the magazine *Rock & Ice*, "A naive climber once approached me in [Yosemite's] Camp 4, said he'd heard I belonged to the Vulgarian Mountain Club and, since he was moving East, wanted to apply for membership. I tried to explain that if you thought yourself a Vulgarian, you were."

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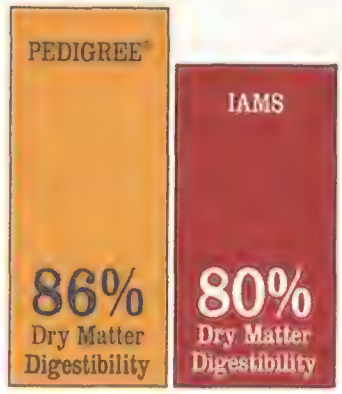

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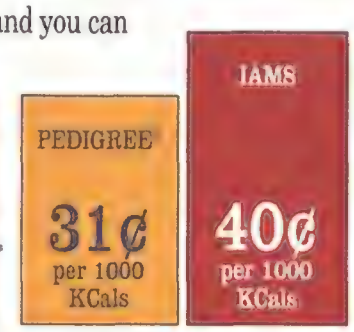

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The Shawangunk Mountains natural area, all told, forms a patchwork of some 24,000 acres of forest, vale and cliff. Glenn Hoagland, executive director of the Mohonk Preserve, a nonprofit organization that protects the land where most of the climbing routes exist, estimates that the preserve has 100,000 visitors a year. I was intrigued to hear Hoagland pronounce the name "Shongums" and to learn that all locals in the know stick to that pronunciation.

According to Hoagland, perhaps half the visitors come to hike. Some 30,000 climbers a year crowd the three most popular cliffs (there are more than 1,000 climbing routes listed), while about 10,000 bikers take to the carriage roads. The rest ride horseback, or cross-country ski in the winter.

I stayed for five days at the Mohonk Mountain House, one of the grandest and quirkiest hotels in America. First opened in 1870 by twin brothers Alfred and Albert Smiley, it has been added onto over the decades in such eclectic fashion that today it looks like the sort of sprawling jeu d'esprit mad king Ludwig might have concocted had he transplanted his fantasy castles from Bavaria to New York State.

The hotel hugs the northern lip of Lake Mohonk. The cliffs that enfold the waters are strewn with clever paths that give onto gazebos ("summer houses," in Smiley parlance) perched on stilts on panoramic ledges.

Elms Cottage, a house down the hill behind the hotel where Dan Smiley lived until his death in 1989, has been turned into a research center and archive. For seven decades, this largely self-taught naturalist obsessively collected not only specimens and artifacts but his own observations in the woods. The 16,000-odd note cards on which Smiley patiently recorded each day's data turn out to be a treasure trove of lore, documenting many a phenomenon—the onset of acid rain in Shawangunk lakes as early as 1931, for instance, and the near extinction of the wild turkey around 1910—that virtually no one else at the time thought to record.

Curator Paul Huth, who continues Smiley's work, pulled out drawers to show me his mentor's stuffed birds and rodents. An Allegheny wood rat bore a laconic tag: "Killed 5 Dec. 1958. Mohonk House, in the linen room. Trapped. Ivory soap had been disappearing."

On my second weekend of climbing last fall, I headed back to the precipice, joined by a quartet of cronies I had recruited for the task. We met at Rock and Snow, the climbing shop in New Paltz run by guidebook author Dick Williams (who in his late 50s still leads 5.12 routes). The store is far more than a gear emporium: it serves as a social center for the climbing community. The bulletin board, covered with handwritten notes only climbers can decipher, distills the arcane syntax of the sport: "Motivated individual wanted for fall projects. Need to know basics. Equal time on sharp end."

Another gathering spot for climbers is the Uberfall, a stretch of carriage road beneath the cliff at the south end of the Trapps (perhaps from a Dutch word for "staircase"), the most popular cliff at the Gunks. The Uberfall first became a scene because it stands at the bottom of the normal descent route from Trapps climbs. The Mohonk Preserve ranger hangs out in his pickup, trading gossip and collecting a daily use fee. (We used to sneak past this official, even though the charge was only 50 cents a day!) A kiosk carries notices, and a brass plaque mounted on a boulder pays homage to Fritz Wiessner and Hans Kraus.

In the hungry days of youth, we could cram six or seven hard climbs into a manic day. Now I was content to polish off two or three classics. Wending my way up a route I climbed three decades before, I felt the nostalgia of the half-remembered in my fingertips.

One evening, as I leafed through my guidebook, I counted 95 Gunks routes I had climbed over the years, nearly every one still attended with a special memory.

The peculiar beauty of the Gunks struck me all over again. Many routes wander across "open books," where two walls face each other aslant, allowing you to watch your partner's progress as though you had the best seat in the house. Time and again, just when a sequence of moves gets "thin" enough to scare you, the perfect, clean-cut hold arrives that guarantees security once more. Nuts and Friends slot snugly into the blessedly frequent cracks.

Just as I was getting into shape, awakened to the stirring of an old ambition, Saturday dawned cold with torrents of rain. With my colleagues, I drove to Poughkeepsie to visit an old friend I hadn't seen in years.

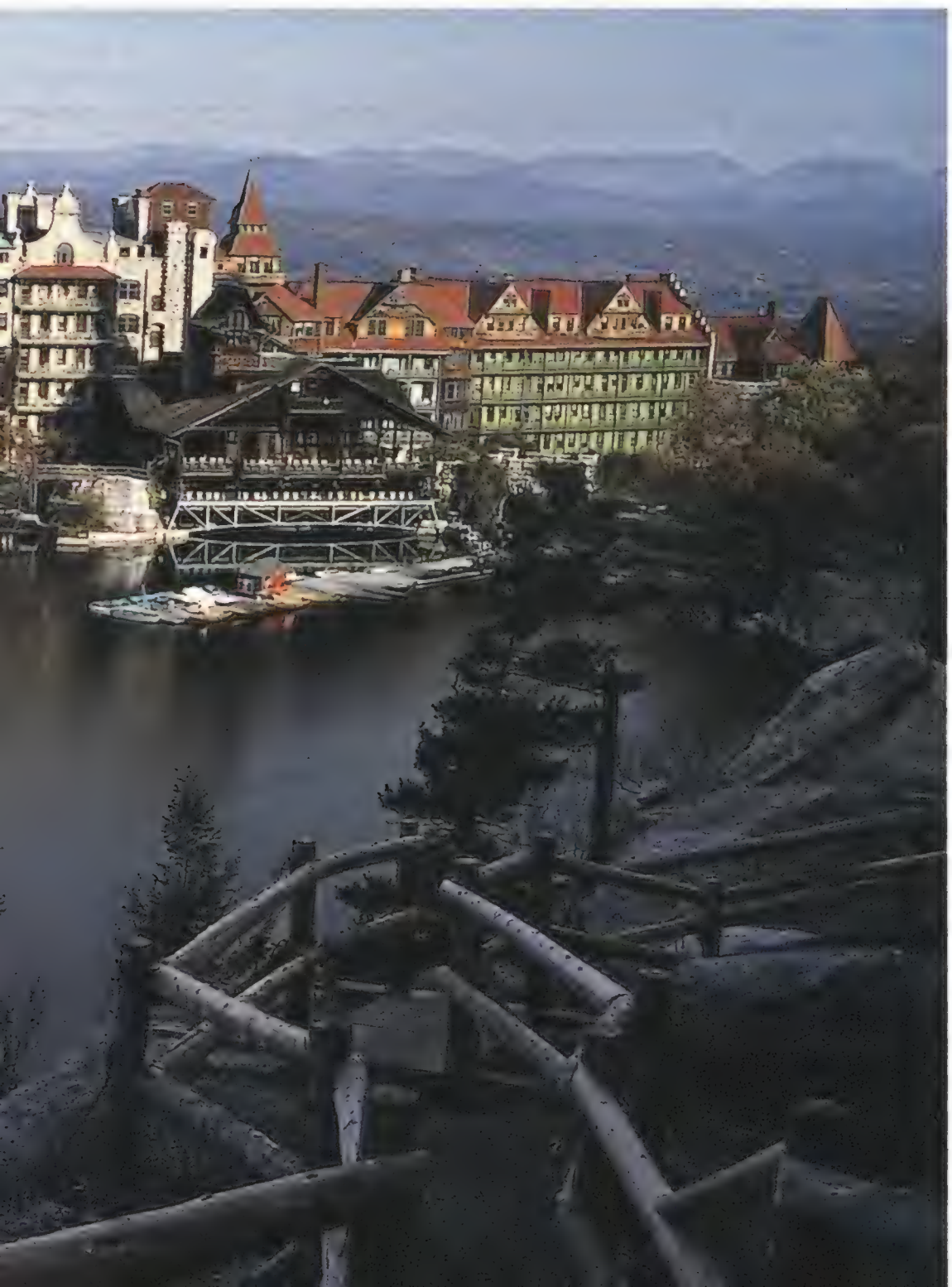
Way back in 1968, Al de Maria and I had made the first ascent of Igikpak, the highest mountain in the western Brooks Range of arctic Alaska. A founding Vulgarian, Al had settled down as a math teacher.

Despite his participation in some of the more raucous of Vulgarian antics, Al has always been one of the safest climbers I know. Short, grizzled, gnome-like, he has a fussy, methodical streak that sorts out danger and casts it aside. The week before I arrived at the Gunks, Al suffered the only serious accident of his 35-year climbing career—he fell 20 feet, hitting a ledge and breaking both ankles.

Suddenly, there in a hospital bed was Al, grayer and more grizzled than ever, but unmistakably himself. His left ankle was bound with conventional plaster, but his right calf sprouted a gruesome metal contraption called an external fixator. As we, his visitors, cringed and winced, Al calmly narrated his mishap.

He had been leading the second pitch of a route called, ominously enough, Twisted Sister. As he had done thousands of times before, he reached up to the top of a hefty-sized block sitting on a ledge and started to pull himself up. In the mountains, Al would have tested the block, slapping a palm to judge by the sound how secure it was. But at the Gunks, the rock is so solid, everyone shortcuts the standard precautions.

The block—the size of a filing cabinet—came loose in



Charter Vulgarian Dick Williams makes the first nude ascent of Shockley's Ceiling, in 1964. His buddies took off with his clothes so his descent was also a first. In stark contrast, the Mohonk Mountain House (left), opened by the Smiley brothers in 1870, presents a sedate refuge for visitors to the Gunks.

Hans Kraus, 90, photographed shortly before his death in March, put up 47 routes at the Shawangunks.

Al's hands. His instinct took over, and as he fell, he shoved the potentially fatal stone away from himself. He landed on both heels and knew at once he was badly hurt; then, as he crumpled on the ledge, he watched the block smash a few feet away.

Miraculously, the block missed both the rope and his belayer. It was a Friday afternoon, and the Gunks were not crowded: on Saturday or Sunday, the stone, hurtling 100 feet to the base of the cliff, would probably have killed someone starting up a nearby route.

Al talked on in his matter-of-fact way, blaming himself for the accident. I couldn't take my eyes off the medieval torture implement attached to his right leg, pins drilled through flesh to stabilize bones that had taken hours of surgery to sort out. He would be three months in a wheelchair. Though none of us said as much, it seemed unlikely that Al would ever climb again; he would have to relearn to walk.

And yet, such is the strength of climbing camaraderie, within minutes we were all joking about old exploits and buffooneries.

No Vulgarian was ever killed at the Gunks in a climbing accident. Yet along with their storied parties and brave ascents, the Vulgarians have also known tragedy. Perhaps the saddest episode of all involved a talented youth named Howie.

Howie fell in love with an older woman, the wife of one of the leading Gunks climbers, herself one of the best women climbers at the crag. Their brief affair flamed, then flickered out. She called an end to it.

One drizzly day when no one else was climbing, Howie walked to the base of a line called Jackie. The route had been "their climb." Howie soloed up the two pitches of Jackie, stood on the ledge at the top, then, with no one to witness, jumped off the cliff. There were those who wanted to believe that Howie had slipped in the rain, but the friends who knew him best said that, rain or no rain, he was too good a climber to have "come off" Jackie by accident.

Saturday evening at dinner, chastened by the sight of Al in the hospital, I asked Rich Goldstone, one of my quartet of cronies, about Howie, whom Rich had known well. Rich retold the old tale—as climbers meeting in pubs have done again and again over the decades, until the remembered deeds take on the shape of myth. But then he added a detail I had not heard before.

"Shortly after Howie died," said Rich, "I climbed Jackie just to look at the ledge. I wanted to see if I could even imagine doing it." Rich paused. "He must have taken a running start. It really shook me up."

On Sunday, the clouds slowly burned away, and the afternoon grew bright. It was a day like the one 60 years before when Fritz Wiessner discovered the Gunks. Along with the clouds, the edgy misgivings that visiting Al in the hospital had provoked burned off, too.

There was time for one more climb. With Rich Goldstone and Matt Hale, I set out for the Near Trapps to climb Yellow Ridge, a 5.7 climb that was one of Wiessner's blithest creations. Matt and I have climbed for 30 years together, including three Alaskan expeditions. And years ago, Matt and Rich, feeling their oats, had done the hardest climbs in two cutting-edge ranges, the Needles of South Dakota and the Bugaboos.

Now Matt led the first pitch, up a steep protruding corner to a shelf out of sight from the ground. Rich and I followed, then he took the second lead. As Matt belayed, I watched closely, for the route traverses 50 feet above empty air before angling wildly toward the sky.

Rich, who climbs only once or twice a year, had complained about being out of shape. Now, however, I marveled at the balance and economy of movement for which he had once been famous. He placed each toe precisely on each minuscule rugosity, using his hands, it seemed, only to caress the holds, not to hang from them. He climbed as though solving a chess puzzle.

Yellow Ridge finishes with the most improbable acrobatics. I watched Rich crane out over space to breach a ceiling that looks from below like a stern dead end. Half an hour after he showed the way, I stretched my limbs into the requisite contortion, found the holds above and poked my head above the last overhang. Rich sat there tied to a tree, tending the rope.

"Good old Fritz," I gasped, breathless from my effort.

Rich grinned, awash in his own memories of his friend Wiessner. "Good old Fritz!" he echoed.

Liza Schwartz climbs High Exposure. Put up by Kraus and Wiessner in 1941, it's *the* classic Gunks route.

By Rudolph Chelminski

'We eat, breathe and dream music. We're a bunch of nerds here'

Make that an international *bunch of nerds. The Berklee College of Music, aka 'the MIT of pop,' is respected all over the world*

"I want a show of hands," Alan Silvestri says. "How many of you spent years at the dinner table whining and wheedling and begging to be doctors or lawyers, only to have your parents say no way—you're gonna be a musician, and you're gonna go to Berklee?"

Pandemonium. In a great, approving roar, the thousand-strong house—mostly first-year students but also family, friends and a sprinkling from the higher classes—instantly erupts into the unanimous laughter of complicity. And when the din finally subsides, not a single hand is raised.

Silvestri is preaching to the converted, of course. Like any good showman, he knows what audience he is playing to, and he gives them what they want to hear. It is early September 1995, and Silvestri, Class of '70, is the keynote speaker at the convocation ceremony for the 50th class ever to enter one of America's most singular and yet, curiously, little-known specialty schools: Boston's Berklee College of Music.

Berklee with an *l-e-e*, that is, and not, as most people expect, an *e-l-e-y*. How many parents simply speak the name and leave it hanging in the phonetic mists of San Francisco Bay when they speak to friends and neighbors of their offsprings' higher studies? ("Well, Pooky's off to, umm, *Berklee* this fall. And what's your little Lucinda up to?") I can't help wondering because I've done it dozens of times myself, ever since the day my own son announced his determination to go study there and nowhere else, come hell or high water.

There is an unconditional, absolutist quality about this very particular, very intriguing place. If the devotion of Berklee's prospective and present students, its alumni and the professors who taught them often rings with the missionary accents of zealotry, it is because they are all engaged in chasing down the answer to one of humankind's most ancient, respectable and elusive riddles: how to make a living making music.

Silvestri was playing straight to the heart of this attitude when he uttered his memorable wisecrack. One of the school's more celebrated alums himself, he is a top-flight Hollywood composer who has written the music for some 45 films, including *Back to the Future* and *Forrest Gump*. Hundreds of other Berklee names now prominent in the music industry are recognizable to any journeyman musician, but chances are that even the general public has heard of Branford Marsalis, the saxophonist and older brother of the trumpet virtuoso, Wynton; arranger Quincy Jones; vibraphonist (and Berklee vice president) Gary Burton; and Alf Clausen, composer for the music of TV's *The Simpsons*.

"The Juilliard of jazz," it has been called, "the MIT of pop." As the names indicate, what distinguishes Berklee from classical colleges and conservatories is that it is devoted to contemporary popular music. It is the oldest, biggest and most important institution of its kind in the world. In the half-century of its existence, more than 30,000 musicians from some 75 countries have passed through its doors. Berklee's student body (2,700 strong) and staff (340 faculty members) dwarf similarly specialized institutions. Its 830 guitar students alone outnumber Juilliard's entire enrollment. While it is nowhere near as wealthy as many of the big traditional colleges, Berklee's $45 million annual budget and nearly $80 million endowment are nothing to sneeze at.

"We are the only college whose principal activity is contemporary music. Other places may have pockets of it, but classical music has first call on their resources. Our mission is different. We were the first to make the study of jazz a respectable academic discipline. When rock came along, we did the same for it. Our curriculum is constantly being readjusted."

The man explaining the college to me is a reserved, 52-year-old lawyer who seems curiously out of place within the temple of anything as brash and brassy as jazz, rock, reggae, rap and other permutations of today's pop field. Not a musician himself, he is Lee Eliot Berk, and he is the president of Berklee.

Students from near and far: (top) Adrian Ross, Canada; Laura MacDonald, Scotland; Takashi Kudo, Japan; (middle) Christian Bausch, Germany; Sebastiaan de Krom, Belgium; Ignace Ntirushwamaboko, Rwanda; (bottom) Eric Griffin, U.S.; Renato Thoms, Panama; Miya, Japan.

Photographs by Richard Schultz

Above: Portrait of founder Lawrence Berk hangs in the office of his son, Lee Berk, president of the school. Below: 50th-year banner decorates a Berklee building.

Lee Berk—Berk-lee. Get it? Well, sooner or later it had to come out, so we might as well face it now, because the business of that name encapsulates much of the college's unlikely history. President Berk's father, Lawrence, who died last year at the age of 87, was an accomplished pianist born and raised in Boston's tough West End. Paying his way through MIT by playing in a local dance band, he was easily the school's best-dressed student, often arriving just in time for classes still clad in the tuxedo he had worn in one all-night gig or another. Finishing his studies in the doldrums of the Depression, he found to his chagrin that there were no jobs for a newly graduated architectural engineer—but music, his trusty friend and benefactor, offered hope of a dollar or two. First in Boston and then in New York, as pianist and arranger for NBC and CBS studio orchestras, Berk pursued a musical career until the war, when he returned to Boston, as an engineer this time, developing radar systems for Raytheon.

When the war ended, though, the music virus was still with him—notably in the form of the teachings of Joseph Schillinger, a hyperintellectual Russian émigré composer (*First Airphonic Suite*) who died in 1943. The abstruse mathematical models Schillinger devised for analyzing and creating music attracted a prestigious list of private students, including George Gershwin, Oscar Levant, Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller—and Lawrence Berk, during his New York period.

Berk chucked radar, Raytheon and security and struck out on his own as a composition teacher. The Schillinger Institute, he called his one-man studio, and he prospered, notably with the help of the G.I. Bill, which sent hundreds of music-mad veterans his way. To the original courses in teaching and arranging he soon added performance, which in no time became (and remains) the most heavily enrolled program of all. Jazz was enjoying unprecedented popularity in those days, and jazz is what Berk taught.

After installing himself in a large brownstone on Newbury Street in Boston's Back Bay section, Berk hired professional musicians to help him with the teaching. It soon became clear that the school needed a new name. Berk's hands-on teaching style by now had outgrown the arcana of the Schillinger method, but "the Berk School" just didn't sing. One morning an assistant burst into Berk's office to announce that he had dreamed that Berk had named the school after his 10-year-old son, Lee. "Berklee—that's it!" cried the boss, and so it was.

By the mid-1950s, Berk's little school was beginning to pull in students from all over the country and even abroad. The trade magazine *Down Beat* took notice, and presently the big guns of jazz were dropping by to give guest performances, coaching and encouragement. The Duke arrived, and the Count, and Satch, Stan Kenton and Woody Herman and, for Lord's sake, Rudy Vallee.

Suddenly it was apparent that Berk had stumbled, willy-nilly, upon something no one else had seen before.

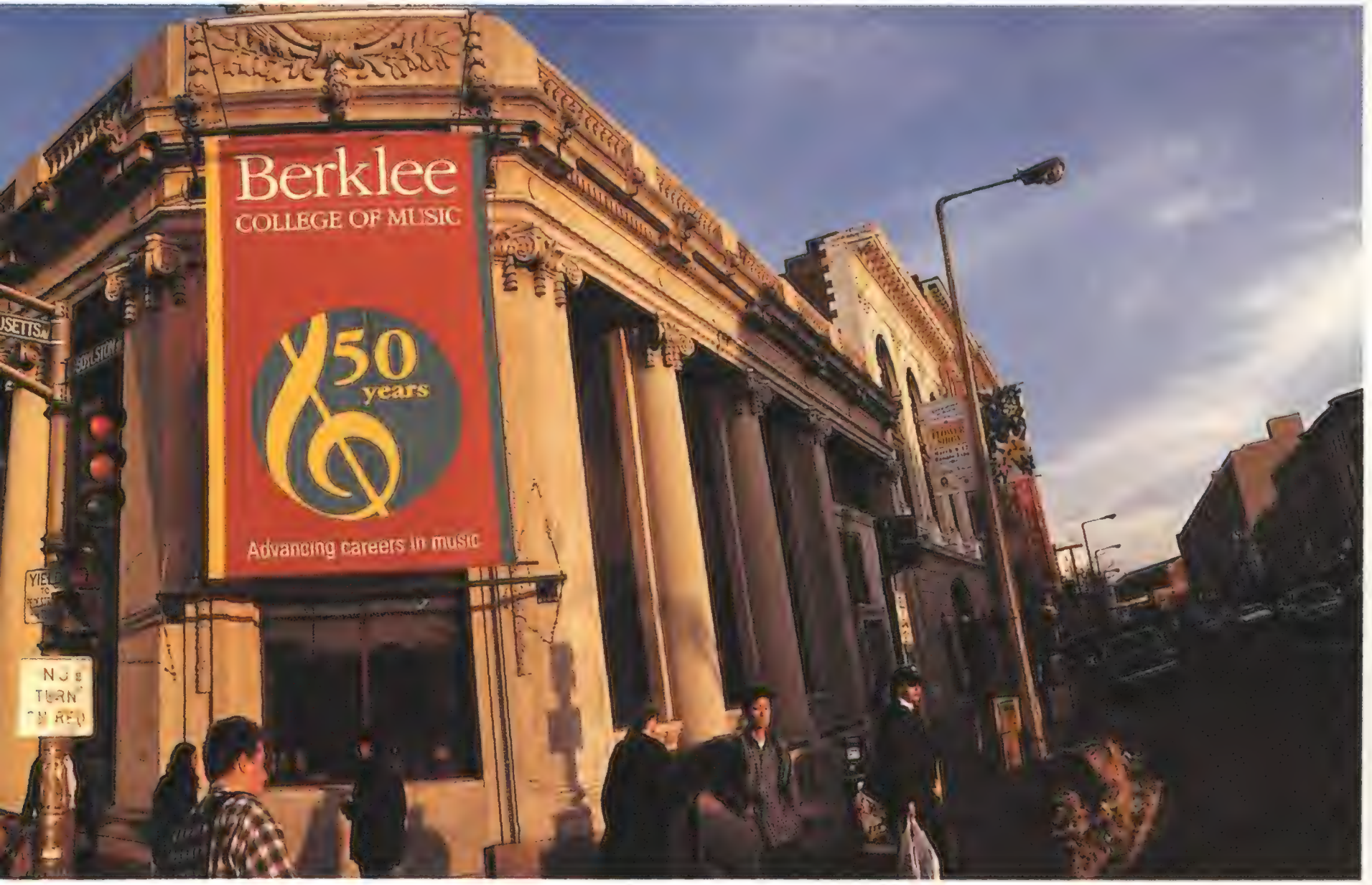
Jazz, universally recognized as America's only native art form, was well on its way to becoming (together with various forms of pop music) a major industry—but one for which no school existed. Berklee's challenge was clear: to turn out competent musical professionals year after year in much the same way that Harvard Business School, just a few miles to the west, was turning out MBAs. "You want to learn bullfighting, you go to Spain," said a saxophone teacher. "You want to learn music, you come to Berklee."

Swift as the winter winds that sweep down "Comm Ave" and "Mass Ave" (as Bostonians refer to Commonwealth and Massachusetts avenues, two major downtown arteries), the curriculum, faculty and student body grew as Berklee expanded from building to building. In 1962 Berk changed the school's status from proprietary to nonprofit and created an academic department to teach languages, arts, science, history and the other courses needed to satisfy the state requirements for accreditation. By 1970, Berklee had become a fully certified, four-year college.

Even so, Berklee can hardly lay claim to a campus. Few would ever take its dozen sundry, dispersed and thoroughly mismatched buildings for an institution of higher learning, and the place is singularly lacking in most of the usual collegiate amenities: lawns, trees, fake Tudor halls, gyms, teams, fraternities and sororities. But it has music. "Does it *ever* have music," laughs Nicole Williams, a personable 23-year-old from the Bronx who is in her last year as a voice major. "We eat, breathe, and dream music. We're a bunch of nerds here."

The nerds swarm in every imaginable size, shape, color and language through the crowded hallways and around the gritty sidewalks. Here an earnest white kid sits with his tuba on a Boylston Street stoop, running through scales, while the black girl next to him does likewise on her muted trumpet. Farther down the street, a drummer hunkers on the sidewalk, running off clickety tattoos as he awaits his turn in a practice studio. Inside the smoke-filled Bouquet Café (house specialties: falafel, hummus, gyros and tabouleh), a Japanese girl is lost to the hard-rock music and the polyglot jabber of other students as she sings along to a score, coffee in one hand and pencil in the other, describing deft little arabesques in the air.

Berklee's student mix is emphatically exotic. Close to



After a long day of lessons and practice downtown, bassist Reuben Rogers, who's from the Virgin Islands, heads home with his instrument. Rogers has already performed with Wynton Marsalis and other jazz greats.

40 percent of the student body is foreign, with the Japanese contingent heading the list at 207 students. "The people of Boston are always surprised to hear how well known the school is around the world," says Christian Fabian Bausch, a German double bass player now in his last year. "I think Berklee is more famous in Germany than in America." So well has Bausch learned the ropes of professionalism that he carefully directs me to the neighborhood's best coffeehouse, orders me a cappuccino and makes sure I am comfortably seated before beginning our interview with the presentation of a six-page résumé. "With a Berklee degree back in Germany I'm all set," he says. He'll do fine, this lad.

Bausch's personal PR campaign may be more polished than most, but it typifies the Berklee approach. "A musician doesn't have to starve," is one of Lawrence Berk's most commonly quoted precepts, and the faculty seldom neglects to distinguish between art and business. A musician may be a creator living in a world of magic, but he needs life skills, too. Art alone won't buy you a ham sandwich. "We teach music," says Larry Bethune, drummer and dean of students, "but we also teach not to wear brown shoes with a tuxedo, what tempo to play at a polite wedding, how to balance a checkbook, and why it's important to show up on time for gigs and recording sessions."

For the casual visitor, one of the first surprises—or disappointments, depending on your viewpoint—is the brisk assiduity of the student body. Tourists trolling for local color see remarkably few tattooed foreheads, nose rings or Super-glued hairdos. Weirdos are probably rarer along Boylston Street than in Harvard Yard, and the Thursday-to-Sunday-night partying now common on many liberal-arts campuses is unknown here. Neither drugs nor discipline has ever been a problem. Berklee students are either too poor or too serious, or both, to throw away their time.

"The thing is, they're focused," says John Bavicchi (opposite), a leading American composer who joined the faculty in 1964. "They're not just vaguely 'going to college.' They already *know* what they want to do in life. In times of student unrest, kids from other colleges have come here and tried to form chapters or set up demonstrations, but it never worked. 'Don't bother me,

Contributor Rudolph Chelminski, who resides in France, has written for SMITHSONIAN *on harmonicas (November 1995) and French baseball (April 1994).*

man,' these kids told them. 'I've got to practice.'"

The rockers and the jazzers coexist in approximately equal numbers, with another third somewhere in between. If most students arrive thinking of themselves primarily as performers, the four-year program shows them other horizons, and gradually they spread throughout the school's four divisions—performance, music technology, professional writing and professional education. Altogether Berklee offers 600 courses within a dozen possible majors that range from songwriting and arranging to film scoring, music synthesis, music business management and music therapy.

The growing range and sophistication of the curriculum reflect the complexity that reigns in today's music scene. Gone is the time when Berklee's main function was to provide sidemen for big bands, earning the place the derisive sobriquet "the chord factory," with the accompanying reputation of being something of a diploma mill. The kids still blow their horns, play their piano exercises and sing their vocals, but that's only a part of the regimen here, because Berklee is, in effect, the farm system for a multibillion-dollar industry. More and more, that industry runs on electronics. In case you were laboring under the illusion that all you need is your instrument and a good tape recorder, pay a visit to the labs that fill every recess of the so-called 150 Mass Ave building. There's a Strangelovian quality to the endless parade of consoles, mixing tables, synthesizers, samplers, sequencers, Macs, DATs, CD-ROMs, moviolas, VCRs and God knows what else—$10 million or more worth—that you see here.

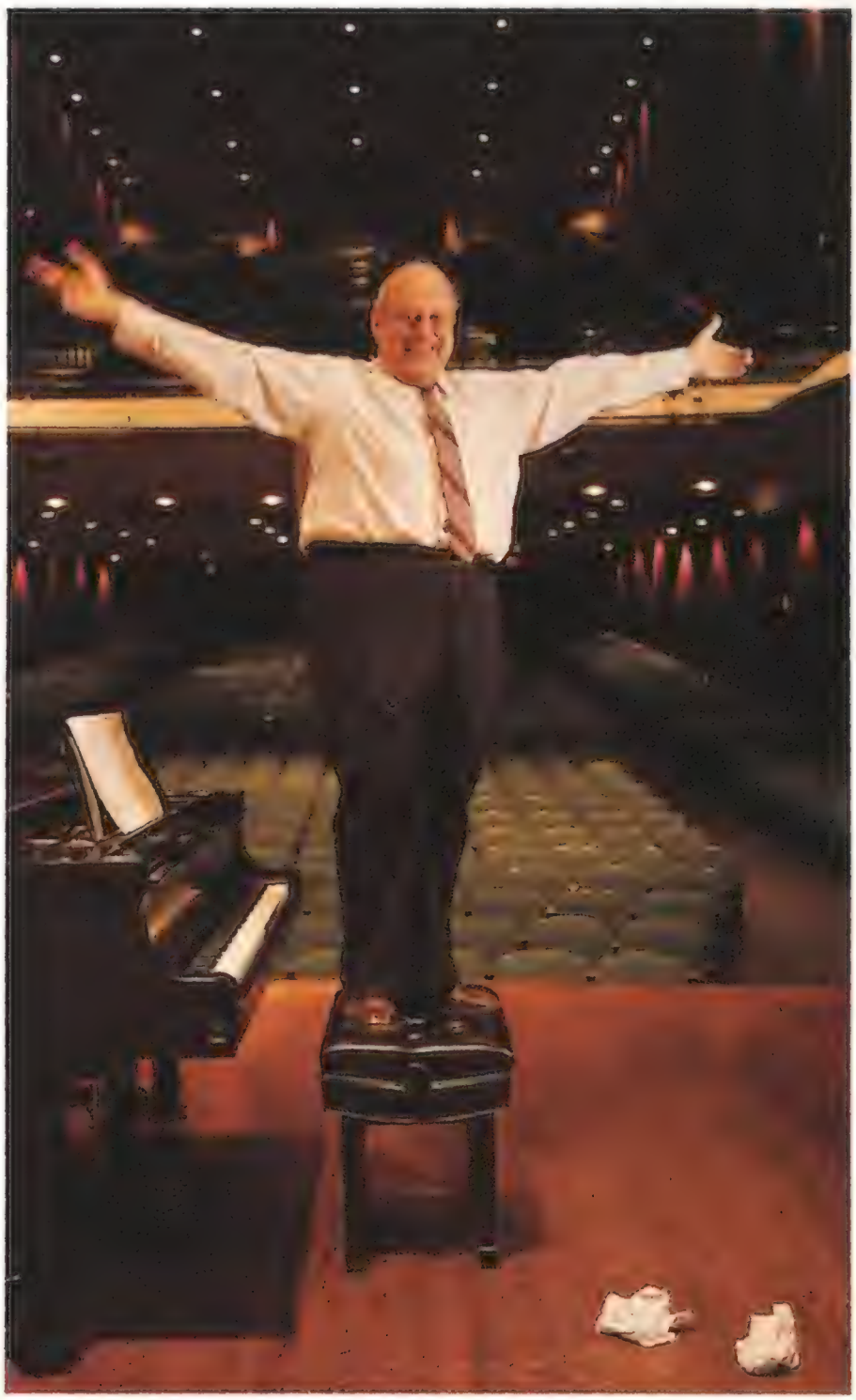
"Just think how Bach and Mozart would have been smiling," says David Mash, Berklee's vice president of information technology. "All that manual writing labor this equipment would have saved them!"

Mash, seated before a computer connected via MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) to a synthesizer, is demonstrating a composition software program by doodling a little melody. He runs off a piano line, adds drums, bass, sax, flute and strings with mere clicks of a mouse (it is always disconcerting to see a flute or saxophone being "played" through a keyboard, but such is the wizardry of electronic synthesis), and within seconds he has built a perfectly plausible orchestration. One more click of the mouse and a printer spits out his creation in musical notation.

"These tools don't change what you do," Mash insists. "They just change how you do it. It's still a human being who's doing the composing." When I mutter something sarcastic about art, hard work and easy outs, he shoots right back at me: "The computer's not going to write your story for you, is it?" Touché.

Digital magic floats over Berklee like an insistent continuo, and every student is required to take an introductory course in music technology. Many, like David Mash,

Flautist Jamie Lourea concentrates in a lesson with Matt Marvuglio, chair of the woodwind department.



Arms spread wide before an empty hall, conducting teacher John Bavicchi spoofs his own ebullience.

Vocalist Nicole Williams, who came to Berklee from the Bronx, says students are mainly interested in work.

a Berklee grad himself, will go considerably further and deeper, building their entire careers in music synthesis. "These days, to be a functioning professional musician you not only need fundamental musical skills but technological skills as well," says Don Puluse, dean of the music technology division. "We're training people for careers that don't even exist yet."

Luckily for good old humanity, though, it's not all "Star Wars" technology. Dennis Montgomery, a Protestant minister and Berklee grad, teaches a course in gospel music. When he leads his student choir in rehearsal, it's nothing but 40 strong voices backed up by piano, drum and bass. In an astonishing performance, worth a ticket in itself, Montgomery personally sings out the difficult passages for all the choir's sections from soprano to baritone. If his voice doesn't quite make it all the way down to bass level, his ear is graced with perfect pitch, as Jimane Nelson rapidly learns. A second-year student from Midland, Texas, Nelson is at the piano when Montgomery asks for an E-major seventh. The student executes, and the minister winces: "E-major seventh, I said!"

This time Nelson gets it right, and Montgomery turns back to his sopranos to order up some serious vibrato. "This building is old. Now I want you to *shake* it." Shake it they do, and Montgomery smiles broadly, swaying and popping his fingers as their exultant voices wash over him. Moments later he has moved to the keyboard to demonstrate a new melodic line. Not surprisingly, he plays the piano with faultless professional ease. Nelson, who is no slouch himself, can only look on admiringly, shaking his head.

I am immediately reminded of Julius Williams, a composition professor and pianist I had met a few days earlier. We were discussing pedagogy for hotshot young musicians, a common breed among first-year students. Williams described his favorite tactic. "I say, 'Any kind of music you can play, I can play better. Bach, Satie, Thelonius Monk, you name it.' Then I teach them to try and beat me."

The young hotshots, especially guitarists, are often self-taught. Overall, more than half of the first-year students are unable to sight-read music when they arrive—a serious deficiency. These youngsters are put through what amounts to a boot camp of courses in music notation, basic harmony and ear-training. Rockers, convinced that their art is all poetry, heart and improvisation, might hate the regimen, but Berklee insists on their learning the grammar of the trade and, sooner or later, even the most intractable fall into line.

"The rock mentality is all about success," says Larry Monroe, chair of the performance division. "Rockers think they've failed if they're not stars by age 22. When they come here, they're already thinking about their first concert and buying their van. We tell them 'Shut up, kid, and learn.'"

John Bavicchi is a past-master of the "Shut up, kid" school of pedagogy. Now over 70 and working only part-time, he is teaching conducting when I drop in on his class. Gravel-voiced, tall and imposing—he looks like a combination of Burl Ives and Lee J. Cobb—Bavicchi is celebrated in Berklee folklore as the resident fly in the ointment. A pure classicist, he disdains jazz and hates rock ("children's music") and will tell anyone who cares to listen that if you can't cite the keys of all the Bruckner symphonies, you can't call yourself a musician.

"Aw, man, it's a trip, isn't it?"

Bavicchi knows everything there is to know about conducting. Tommy Ganci, a big, shambling student from Anaheim, California, is guilty first of inattention and then a smart-alecky response to a question. The maestro cuts him down with a witheringly unprintable remark, then calls him up to the podium to conduct a little composition for piano, sax and hand-clap by fellow student Luiz Caldas. To general surprise, Ganci handles the exercise commendably, beginning his demonstration by authoritatively tapping the podium with his baton, just like Leonard Bernstein. "Aw, man, it's a trip, isn't it?" laughs Bavicchi, and the clash of only a few moments earlier is already history.

Whatever success Ganci, Caldas and the other students encounter after graduation, the chances are more than good that they will make their careers in music. At least 85 percent of Berklee graduates do. Where jazz, rock and pop will go in the next few decades is no more predictable now than it was in 1945 when Lawrence Berk struck off on his own. Whatever happens, there is little doubt that the Berklee College of Music will be a major player. Many professional bands today include at

least one Berklee grad, and leading jazz soloists like pianists Cyrus Chestnut and Jacky Terrasson owe at least part of their success to time spent in the classes and practice rooms at 150 Mass Ave. Satellite "little Berklees," officially associated schools founded by grads, have sprung up in Paris, Barcelona, Tel Aviv, Athens and Helsinki, and two others in Japan have become the latest to join the network.

That word "network" is the key to it all. The network concept preoccupies students as much as staff, because the Berklee experience goes well beyond learning to sight-read, understand theory and get better at an instrument. It is about meeting people and making professional connections, too. In 5 or 10 or 20 years, there will still be people in the industry who need a score for a movie, a technician for a studio, a teacher for a school or a guitarist for a band. And a lot of those people are sure to be fellow Berklee grads.

Charlie Turner, a fourth-year student majoring in guitar and voice, doesn't hesitate to describe some of Berklee's introductory courses as "rinky-dink," but mainly he feels an intense admiration for his odd yet compelling alma mater. "Part of what I'm paying $20,000 a year for is connections—this place is network central. Apart from my degree, I'll take away all those connections, plus a much deeper knowledge of my craft than when I started. You know, in the business you speak of someone who's really good as a guy who's got 'chops.' Well, when I leave Berklee, I'm going to be someone who's got chops."

As countless composers before him have done, Geoff Zanelli courts his muse with a grand piano and a pencil. A film-scoring and production major at Berklee, he plans to work in the movie industry after graduation.

Annie, PaPa and me
9-19-42

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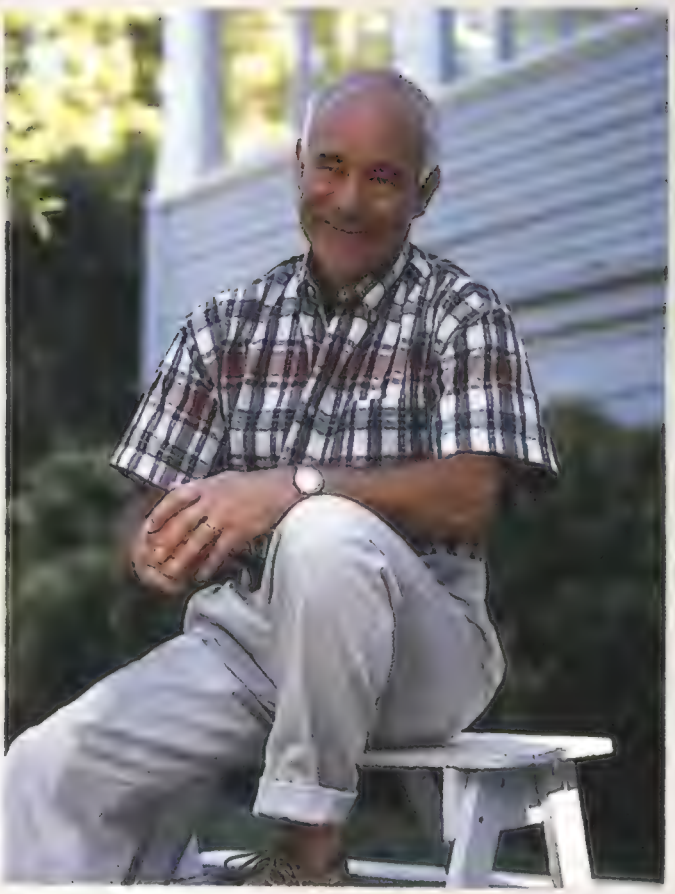

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By Katharine Whittemore

How a weed once scorned became the flower of the hour

The gaudy sunflower is the ornament of the Nineties, turning up everywhere and on everything, including baseball players' faces

This all started some five years ago when my friend Allison moved to Florida. Allison loves sunflowers but she doesn't see many down there in the limestone country of the Keys. Clever me, though. I decided that whenever I wrote Allison from Boston, where I live, it would be on greeting cards festooned with her favorite flowers.

At first, it wasn't easy to find what I was after. I browsed card stands for buttery photographs, scanned for Monets, Gustav Klimts or Georgia O'Keeffes. Usually there was a Van Gogh, whose famous painting *The Sunflowers* (1888) sold for nearly $40 million in 1987, but that was about it.

As time passed, however, sunflowers began turning up everywhere. It got strange. Not only did the card collections grow positively yolky with *Helianthus* (*helios* = sun, *anthus* = flower), but I'd go to the movies and count a trio of different sunflower T-shirts in line for popcorn (popped, increasingly, with sunflower oil). At salad bars, suddenly, sunflower kernels vied with croutons. One window at the Harvard Coop displayed boxer shorts flocked with sunflowers. A wineshop featured Georges Duboeuf chardonnay with bold sunflowers on the label. A store nearby offered umbrellas that opened into enormous . . . need I say it?

Pottery Barn bowls, Lillian Vernon doormats, totebags and jewelry at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts store. Calendars, notepads, journals, photograph albums. Sunflower hair conditioner by Herbal Essences, sunflower barrettes. Backpacks with sunflower-riddled scenes from the Disney film *Pocahontas*. Bedsheets, hot plates, lamps. Sunflowers, an eau de toilette by Elizabeth Arden. Neckties. Suspenders.

None of this was lost on local florists, who yellowed right up, filling their display windows with sunflowers. At the neighborhood market, the cereal aisle proffered something called Sun Crunchers, its cheerful box adorned with . . . guess what? At an airport shop in California I found "Easy-Stitch Sunflower Pillows" on the cover of *Family Circle*, "Make Our Easy Sunflower Cake" on *Woman's Day* and "Sunflower Season: Reaching New Heights" on *Harrowsmith Country Life*. I'll say. New heights of runaway feel-goodism. "Sunflowers are a joyous crop," one writer gushed, touting such varieties as Sunbeam, Teddy Bear and Big Smile. I put the magazines back on the display rack and walked over to skim the card section. One, two, three . . . fourteen.

"Sunflowers have become a classic in the last five years," says Belinda Nemeth, a creative director at American Greetings in Cleveland. "They're happy. They're American, they're strong, they persevere against the elements." As such, sunflowers work best on get-well cards. But they're also one of the few flowers suitable for masculine cards, Nemeth notes. She backs this up by sending me scads of guy-themed samples, all brawny with sunflowers: "It's Father's Day!" "Just For You, Nephew," "My Husband, My Friend."

So now everyone's cashing in. W.J. Deutsch & Sons, in Armonk, New York, imports all that sunflower-labeled Georges Duboeuf chardonnay. "Why sunflowers?" I ask William Deutsch. "Have I got a story for you," he begins. "The label used to show a little purple thistle the French call a *chardon*. In France, that was fine, but over here sales were not too exciting. My daughter Susan suggested changing the image to a sunflower. Sales skyrocketed more than fivefold."

I visit the swank Manhattan offices of Elizabeth Arden, the cosmetics company, to get the goods on the scent called Sunflowers. Susan Arnot Heaney, the publicist (blonde, in a cherry-red suit), and Clare Cain, the fragrance's creator (blonde, in a lime-colored jacket), are thrilled with their success. Since its 1993 launch, the Sunflowers product line has been "blowing out the doors," Heaney says. Of course, the scent has absolutely nothing to do with the plant. "Real sunflowers either smell bad or not at all!" Heaney explains. It's their spunky image that counts.

Cranberries, blueberries, pecans, strawberries and sunflowers are among our primary native crops, but several centuries ago there was some confusion about where sunflowers originated. This was due mainly to a

They may not smell but they do sell, as this array of products decorated with sunflowers makes clear.

GEORGES DUBOEUF
SAINT-VÉRAN
1995
Sunflowers
SUN CRUNCHERS
NEW

Sunflowers in full bloom (top) are a lovely sight, but by the time they're ready for harvest (bottom) they're a mess. Acreage planted in sunflowers in this country increased from 76,000 in 1966 to 3.6 million in 1995.

16th-century Spanish explorer's description of sunflowers he saw in what he called Peru. Modern archaeologists, however, have found seed caches in Tennessee dating from almost 3000 B.C., leaving no question that the sunflower's home is North America.

Sunflowers do carry a strong Native American pedigree—as an old synonym, *Sola Indianus*, bears out. A number of tribes used different parts of the sunflower to treat rattlesnake bites, relieve chest pains and heal cuts. The Hopis made a purple dye from the seeds. Others used sunflower oil as a hair dressing and kneaded sunflower meal into breads. My favorite Indian sunflower recipe, from the Hidatsa of North Dakota, runs thus: parch seeds in a clay pot, pound them into a fine meal, roll it into a ball. Wrap the ball in buffalo-heart skin for storage. Perfect for long treks; kind of a Native American granola bar.

It was the Spanish conquistadors who "discovered" sunflowers in North America and took them back to Europe, along with corn, tomatoes, potatoes and gold. By the early 1500s, sunflowers were growing in the botanical gardens of Madrid. From there, they made their way across Europe to the Balkans and Russia.

In fact, Peter the Great collected some seeds on one of his European trips, and by 1880 Russia had 400,000 acres of sunflowers under cultivation; by World War I, more than two million. Such popularity grew, intriguingly, from a loophole. For the 40 days before both Easter and Christmas, the Orthodox Church of Russia issued a roster of high-fat foods that were banned.

The National Garden Bureau recognized *Helianthus'* stature, making 1996 "The Year of the Sunflower."

Sunflower oil was just novel enough to avoid inclusion.

Today, nearly 85 percent of Russia's cooking oil comes from sunflower-crushing facilities. Until the Soviet breakup, the USSR was the number one producer of sunflower seeds in the world. As of last year, though, Argentina ranked first. The United States produced 1,817,000 metric tons of seeds, Russia 4,200,000 and Argentina 5,900,000.

The current cultural rage for sunflowers is by no means the first. Back in the 1870s and '80s, sunflowers were very big in Europe during the short-lived Aesthetic movement. They occurred "in every conceivable material from cast-iron and brickwork to embroidery," one book on the period observes. Van Gogh and Monet couldn't get enough of them, of course, and the British were especially taken. William Morris, the poet, artist and designer, splattered them on his wallpaper. William Blake penned an ode: "Ah, sunflower! weary of time./ Who countest the steps of the sun/Seeking after that sweet golden clime/Where the traveler's journey is done."

While he was still in his early 20s, the Irish writer, wit and dandy Oscar Wilde became a leading popularizer, if that is the right word, of "art for art's sake" and the Aesthetic movement's ubiquitous sunflower motif. When he gave a lecture in Boston, 60 Harvard students showed up to ridicule him, each wearing a lily in his lapel (a Wilde trademark) and carrying a sunflower. Wilde was caricatured in *Punch* as the head of a flower declaiming: "O, I feel just as happy as a bright sunflower!"

By the early 1880s at least one other magazine, *The British Architect*, had had it with artistic reform and sunflowers. "If there is nothing else to illustrate the fact," the editors railed, "the sickening repetition of the sunflower in all sorts of decorative work (as though it were the sum total of all beauty) would be enough to show how little the general public have yet derived from the increased study of art."

Back home, the sunflower's time had not yet come. A handful of farmers grew the plant for silage but that was all. "The sunflower 'tis rank and coarse/'Twould make a lovely bouquet for a horse" ran one aphorism. In fact, American books of the day snubbed sunflowers for their indelicacy, their immigrant loutishness. They were scorned as noxious weeds. Remember, those farmers only knew wild sunflowers, the ones that look more like black-eyed Susans, not the lush cultivated sort then developing in Europe. And sunflowers as ornamentals? You wouldn't find them in a flower shop, wrote botanist Charles Heiser jr. in his book *The Sunflower*. "At best, you might see them used to camouflage a garbage can or a privy."

How did we get from derision to de rigueur? Think Russia by way of Canada. In the 1870s groups of Mennonites emigrated from Russia to the prairies of southern Manitoba. They brought sunflower seeds with them, and by the 1880s their Mammoth Russian variety was appearing for sale in American seed catalogs. Nothing much happened, though, until World War I, when the United States was scrounging for any source of oil and discovered that sunflower oil could be used for margarine and the manufacture of munitions.

Another long pause and then finally a sort of sunflower Sputnik era. Long story. The gist of it is, there's this research director at Cargill, the Minneapolis agricultural corporation, named Richard Baldwin, and an elderly Russian geneticist, V. S. Pustavoit. In 1965, Baldwin visits Pustavoit at the old man's labs in Krasnodar,

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Because of hybridization, sunflowers are a motley lot that range from the so-called red variety (top row, middle) and the burly double specimen (bottom, left) to a spindly denizen of the desert (bottom, right).

by the Black Sea. Pustavoit is the man who figured out how to raise the oil content of sunflower seeds from 27 percent to 45 percent—yes, twice that of soybeans. The two scientists chat, and eventually Baldwin asks if he might take a few of those 45 percent seeds back home. Nervous silence. Pustavoit pictures himself eating fish-eye soup in the gulag and says, "*Nyet.*" Baldwin is devastated, but a little bit later his interpreter casually asks Pustavoit for a few seeds "to eat in the car."

Shortly after that, plant breeders figured out how to hybridize sunflowers for disease resistance and higher yields. Those seeds and the ones Baldwin brought back from Russia became the foundation for the sunflower renaissance now in full swing.

Baldwin came home at the perfect moment. Midwestern farmers were desperate for ideas, since the Red River Valley of Minnesota and North Dakota was in the throes of a flax crisis. (And who can forget where they were when they first heard of *that*?) No longer were their fields lavender-blue with flax blossoms. Latex had put an end to that; paint manufacturers were cutting back on linseed oil, which is pressed from flax.

Yet there was still a flax infrastructure in place—crushing facilities and so on—that could be retrofitted for sunflowers. In the late 1960s, the Russians, desperate for foreign currency, began dumping much of their sunflower oil on the European market. But then they suddenly backed off and the Europeans, now hooked on the stuff, beseeched us, the true motherland of sunflowers, to help. We were happy to oblige, and come summer, the Red River Valley turned swaggeringly, luridly, blindingly yellow.

Fargo, North Dakota, the heart of the Red River Valley, is the nerve center of the sunflower business. Some very important sunflower genetic research goes on here at the Northern Crop Science Laboratory (NCSL), which is part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The life of a sunflower is full of aggravations, including mildew, wilt, rust, beetles, moths, midges, weevils and blackbirds, not to mention major droughts and, at the other extreme, too much rain. Even bears. John Swanson, a farmer in Mentor, Minnesota, told me he's seen bear tracks in his fields. From the look of the damage, he figures they must lumber in, eat their fill and then, for fun, lie down and roll around, scratching themselves on the broken stalks.

At the NCSL, scientists are trying to create sunflower hybrids that can stand up to some of these enemies. Their work involves traditional breeding techniques as well as cloning, in which they extract the desired trait and genetically copy it into select sunflower DNA.

Take a midsummer drive across the Plains states, from

Kansas to Montana to Minnesota, and the many sunflower fields you see will look fairly uniform, all the plants about the same height, each unopened head following the sun's path in the sky. (The French word for sunflower is *tournesol*, meaning it turns toward the sun.) But that's not the case in these Fargo experimental fields; they all look different. Geneticist Jerry Miller shows me a rust-resistant line from South Africa, something called Armavirskij 50 from Russia, and various shorts and talls from Romania, Algeria, Israel and Texas. "Beetles don't like this one," Miller says, pointing to a silverleaf variety. "If they lay their eggs on the stem, the eggs desiccate. Unfortunately, the midges happen to love it. You can't get everything in one plant."

Right now, the hottest thing in 'flowers (that's the shorthand, out here) is something called "high oleic" sunflower oil. "The industry wants to make an oil that can be legitimately labeled as being one of the lowest in saturated fats," Miller explains. That's the holy grail. Sunflower oil has less saturated fat than soybean, olive and corn oils but more than safflower and canola. The challenge, therefore, is to find a way to lower its total saturates to 8 percent.

Sunflower oil and seeds consistently rate high in consumer-appeal polls. This likability has prompted the National Sunflower Association (NSA) in Bismarck, North Dakota, to promote a bunch of sunflower-exploiting recipes—sunflower-pumpkin muffins, that sort of thing. The NSA is a "farmer-controlled, nonprofit commodity organization working to improve the status of U.S. sunflower producers and the industry in general," it says on the masthead of *The Sunflower*, a magazine the organization publishes.

Between the sunflowers growing in the fields and the sunflower muffins baking in your oven there is interposed this "infrastructure" I referred to earlier. It consists mainly of seed-processing facilities like Dahlgren & Company, in Crookston, Minnesota. The floors here resemble bald tires because over the years millions of errant sunflower oilseeds have been squashed underfoot. Just so you know—oilseeds are solid black, while edible seeds (also known as confection seeds) are striped. Both are used as birdseed. About 60 percent of the market is in oilseeds, another 20 percent is used for human consumption and 20 percent goes to the birds.

Dahlgren started processing confection seeds back in the late 1950s. The company sells its striped seeds as roasted kernels and as in-shells, and it even markets the discarded hulls for turkey bedding. "Contrary to the song," quips Kelly Engelstad, "turkeys don't like to be in straw." Engelstad, Dahlgren's president, is showing me around today, along with Don Lilleboe, a dry-humored editor at *The Sunflower*, who looks a bit like the actor Ed Harris. Lilleboe pens articles like "Tempted to Cut Nitrogen for 'Flowers in '95?" He answers most of my reportorial requests by exclaiming, "You bet!"

The Dahlgren plant smells warm and salty, and the din forces us to pantomime questions and answers. Huge chutes spit seeds furiously and an electric eye sorts impurities from the kernels. Other machines shake out bins of small, medium and large seeds. Any stray leaves or burrs ("trash" as farmers say, or "dockage") are

A familiar sight in sunflower country, a goldfinch perches on a dried head.

Not as familiar, a scarecrow in fancy clothes looks almost too attractive.

Connie and Roger White check the 'flowers growing in their North Dakota fields. They spend a lot of time scaring off freeloading blackbirds. Ironically, a fifth of all sunflower seeds produced here goes to feed birds.

whomped onto a sort of Velcro apparatus that holds them fast. Impact hullers smash the seedcovers, scootching out the little beige hearts, which are then zipped by pneumatic conveyors to the roasting plant. After roasting and salting, these kernels are packaged for sale in vending machines and stores.

The roasting plant is big and runs round the clock yet requires only about ten workers, some of whom are called master roasters. Engelstad tells me masters spend an average of five years learning their trade. It's an art; if you roast seeds a bit too long, you lose the entire 500-pound batch. Our host scoops up palmfuls of ready kernels for Lilleboe and me, all warm, gleaming, fragrant and salty. Sublime.

By the end of my stay, my lips feel permanently shriveled. Whether they're in-shells (also called "crack-and-spits") or shelled kernels (technically called "achenes"), I am eating sunflower seeds with a pathetic lack of self control. Engelstad sympathizes. "I can't go to a game without a bag of 'em," he confesses.

Neither can a lot of other people. Connie Hofland, the marketing director at the NSA, tells me no precise figures are available, but she guesses domestic sales for human consumption have more than doubled in the past decade. However, the seeds are a janitor's nightmare and a lawyer's dream (think liability) because they make the floors of theaters, gymnasiums and arenas dangerously slippery. This is why, in a sunflower booster town like Fargo, you can't buy the seeds at many indoor sporting events.

Roger Maris, the New York Yankee who in 1961 established a new home-run record for a single major-league season, is buried in Fargo not far from the NCSL. In Maris' day, chewing tobacco was perceived as the professional player's chaw of choice, but concerns about image and health are changing that. (In 1993, in fact, the minor leagues banned chewing tobacco outright.) So what to do about all those oral fixations? You guessed it. Sunflower seeds are becoming increasingly popular in the dugout. It has reached the point where baseball even has its own "official" sunflower supplier. David & Sons, based in Fresno, California, makes sure every major- and minor-league locker room is well stocked.

A few years back, Larry Andersen, now a pitching coach with the minor-league Reading Phillies in Pennsylvania, improvised a bit of sunflower goofiness that has added a whole new dimension to the game. Andersen discovered that if he opened sunflower-seed hulls slightly, they would pinch his skin and stick wherever he put them. As a relief pitcher with the San Diego Padres, he began occupying his idle hours in the bull pen by putting them all over his face, a pastime that is now being taken up by other players. Doesn't it hurt? "Only the ones on the eyelids," Andersen insists.

"Why does everyone laugh when I offer to drive?"

"Slower traffic keep right. Is that a personal attack?"

"How long before news traffic reporters start referring to me by name?"

"Please, let my car start today."

"Maybe my date won't mind if we take the bus."

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Internationally, sunflower-seed preferences serve as a kind of cultural barometer. "The Spanish like the recreational aspect of crack-and-spits," Connie Hofland explains. Japan only imports shelled kernels. "The Japanese are not crack-and-spitters," Hofland says. "To them, in-shells are bird food. At one trade show we gave them some, and they wouldn't spit them out!"

The Russians outdo everyone with a kind of Khrushchev-shoe-pounding approach. It's said the average Russian can crack a steady stream of seeds on one side of his mouth, while dislodging kernels with his tongue and simultaneously spitting out empty hulls from the other side. "The Germans are our number one export market," Hofland says. Kernels. Not crack-and-spits. And the French? Kernels only. "They think crack-and-spits are uncivilized," Kelly Engelstad says. "As incomprehensible as corn on the cob."

It was August, wheat harvest time, when I dropped in one morning on Roger and Connie White, of Stirum, North Dakota. We chatted in the tidy kitchen of what they like to call the "Western White House." Roger is leather-brown and whip-thin; Connie, a little softer looking, wears sunflower earrings. The Whites devote 600 of their 2,500 acres to 'flowers. On the wall is a photograph of the farm surrounded on three sides by their yellow blooms.

"Seems we always get good 'flowers," says Roger. "They take the drought, they're reliable." This is the salient fact about sunflowers: they're remarkably tough, often require little fertilizer and don't need irrigation. They are able to scavenge nutrients left unused in the soil by shallower grains like wheat or rye (the roots of some sunflowers can go down as deep as eight feet) making them a fine rotation crop.

Unlike T-shirt makers and china painters, farmers don't get excited about sunflowers when they're at the glowing, smiley-face stage. Money is made at harvest time, in the late fall, when sunflowers are paper-bag brown, raspy, hangdog messes. (When Alf Landon, of Kansas, ran against FDR for President in 1936, he wore campaign buttons in the shape of a sunflower, the Kansas state flower. "Sunflowers die in November," the Democrats quipped, and sure enough, Landon lost by a landslide.) "They're the homeliest things you ever saw," says Connie White. In old Russia, peasants used nail-studded paddles to rake the seeds free. The Whites use a special head on their wheat combine. "It snaps and crackles and sounds like a forest fire," says Roger.

Though their 'flowers almost always "come through real nice," as Roger says, the Whites have had to cope with stem weevils, too much rain and, most irksome of all, seed-eating blackbirds. The couple have tried to spook them with propane boomers, which emit periodic sound blasts. They've also hacked down the cattails in nearby sloughs; blackbirds tend to converge on wetlands, then forage from there. There was a time when the Whites would just plain shoot at them, more to frighten than to kill. "In the evenings, we'd get our guns," Connie recalls. "Roger would take his lawn chair to one end of the field, and I'd sit on the other, and we'd just shoot and shoot." A wee irony there. Last year, in this country alone, about 300,000 tons of sunflower seeds were sold to feed birds, up from 121,500 a decade ago.

I asked Sue Wells, director of the National Bird-Feeding Society, in Northbrook, Illinois, why birds are so fond of them. "It's the high oil content. Big birds like cardinals and grosbeaks can crack the hull of the striped seeds, and the little ones—chickadees, goldfinches—prefer hulled seeds." Aelred Geis, research director of the Maryland-based Wild Bird Centers of America (and known in certain circles as "Dr. Birdfeed"), concurs. "If I had to pick one all-around seed for birds it would be sunflower seeds—especially the black ones."

One morning I talked with Jay Schuler, who is the president of the seed company SIGCO Sun Products, in Wahpeton, North Dakota. The subject turned to birdfeed. "I guess you all have less children back East," he offered, grinning, "so you feel a need to adopt some birds." We silly birders account for a fifth of his business.

A few days later, my homebound plane lifted off the Fargo runway and I watched the fields below us blur into huge Mondrians—no primary reds or blues here but plenty of yellows. When I got back to Boston, I went through my mail. Bills, magazines, a card from Allison. "Hope you had a great time," she wrote, "and that you're not too sick of these!" She meant the picture on the front of the card.

Vincent van Gogh thought his sunflower paintings were worthless. This one sold for $39.9 million in 1987.

By Robert Wernick

Let's hear it for the lowly sound bite!

In which it is amply demonstrated that the sound bite, long a pariah of pundits and pooh-bahs, is really a helpmeet to man

In the year 1525, King Francis I of France led his troops into an indefensible position in some fruit orchards outside Pavia in Italy and, in the subsequent battle, lost his army and was himself taken prisoner. That night, in a long letter rambling through the tangled thickets of 16th-century prose, a disorderly jumble of subordinate clauses and dangling participles, the captive king wrote to his mother to explain how the unthinkable had happened, and pour out all his grief and rage and humiliation and unconquerable determination to survive. By the time his mother, her royal counselors and her ladies-in-waiting had read it and commented and gossiped about it, the message had been reduced to a single sentence: "All is lost but honor."

It was recognized at the time, and has been recognized ever since, as a perfect expression of the noble side of the brutal aristocratic culture that Francis personified, just as Leo Durocher's "Nice guys finish last" has been recognized as a perfect expression of the dark side of the individualist-competitive culture of the 20th century. Picayune scholars will go to any lengths to prove that deathless lapidary phrases like these were not actually said in precisely their reputed form by their reputed authors. They have asserted with footnotes that Richard III never said "My kingdom for a horse" any more than Yogi Berra said "It's déjà vu all over again." But the pedants miss the point. These phrases were what these people meant to say, and would have said if they had had more time and more verbal facility. You cannot expect a man like Francis I, covered with dust and blood, who has just seen his life crumble around him, his best friends screaming in agony, to produce a polished phrase following the rhetorical rules and devices fashionable at the moment. The phrase nevertheless belongs to the man who is said to have said it, and it is a part of living history.

Does it matter if Bishop Latimer, tied to the stake in Bloody Mary's England, said to his comrade in martyrdom, "Play the man, Master Ridley; we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out," or if he only said something like it and the words were refashioned by the Protestant propagandist John Foxe? Those were the words that were learned and repeated and treasured by the people who turned England from a Catholic to a Protestant country in the years that followed. Honor, if not approval, has therefore been deservedly paid to Francis I and Durocher and Bishop Latimer and many others for having encapsulated or summarized whole eras, whole cultures, whole mass movements in a few memorable words. Just so, in more recent times, honor and approval (or disapproval) have been paid to Harry Truman for summing up his conception of the Presidency and of his own character with the words, "The buck stops here." And to Walt Kelly's Pogo when he reduced the philosophical uncertainties about

Illustrations by Rowan Barnes-Murphy

degradation of the environment to the single compound sentence "We have met the enemy and he is us." Not to mention Nancy Reagan when she miniaturized the case for an individual-voluntaristic (as opposed to a macroeconomic-bureaucratic) approach to controlling substance abuse into three words, "Just say no"; and Walter Mondale when he skewered his political rivals with "Where's the beef?" a line lifted from the little old lady in the Wendy's ads. Calvin Coolidge, the most taciturn of our Presidents, is remembered for concentrating a thousand books of theology into his description of his preacher's Sunday morning sermon on sin: "He was agin it."

Honor will no longer be paid, however, if we listen to the TV commentators and newspaper editorialists who are daily shaping the minds of the new generation, Generation Z. According to these authorities, the old world of civilized rational discourse—in which Presidents wrote their own two-hour speeches in longhand, and ideas were exposed calmly and at length to the people—a leaky craft that in fact began taking water years ago, has now been sunk without a trace by a new form of torpedo called the sound bite.

Editorialists and commentators have taken this technical phrase from the radio and TV studios and turned it into a general term of abuse for any short statement they disagree with—a better term might be "unsound bite." It may be defined as a device used by wicked people to reduce complex issues to simple formulas in order to sway public opinion. Only take away the adjective "wicked" and you have a definition of one of the oldest and most honorable devices known to man.

In fact, it is hard to see how we could have made much progress at all without it. For civilized life, or any kind of life, demands a series of decisions, choices of roads taken and not taken. Ideally, you should take long and careful thought before any decision, and sound bites by themselves are no substitute for thought. But in the world of things as they are, it is impossible to think without them. The time available for careful thought that takes in all the variables and weighs every pro against every con is limited. We could not cross a street, much less fight a war or pass an omnibus appropriations bill, without having a mass of ready-made formulas available to summarize previous experience.

These formulas may be right or wrong, wise or foolish. They may be fiercely partisan or they may express universal beliefs. Every nation that goes to war produces sound bites to prove its cause is just, but not many can pass the test in the judgment of future historians. Everyone, however, accepts and acts upon the principle popularized in a sound bite by a U.S. Senator, William Learned Marcy, in 1832: "To the victor belong the spoils." Similarly, politicians and theologians can debate the merits and demerits of capitalism from here to doomsday, but the system itself runs on, merrily or not, following the principle reduced by Adam Smith to a commonsense sound bite: "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest."

You could spend years trying to

achieve a precise calculation of the relative merits of Mr. Dole and Mr. Clinton, but you have to vote on November 5 of this year. Unless you are the kind of person who can analyze stacks of newspaper files and Congressional testimony, your decision will almost certainly be made on the basis of sound bites picked up from Dan Rather and C-SPAN and lectures in high school civics classes, and things you have heard in coffeeshops or bars, and tales your mother told you.

This was as true when America was full of wise founding fathers as it is today, when it is full of Don Imus and Howard Stern. Political speeches were longer in those days, and the voters may have vociferously enjoyed them, but that does not mean they were listening in the sense of following a closely reasoned argument. If audiences came away with anything at all permanently fixed in their minds, it was a sound bite, often the one that brought the speech to a triumphant close: Patrick Henry's "Give me liberty or give me death!"; Daniel Webster's "Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable"; Abraham Lincoln's "Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not

perish from the earth"; William Jennings Bryan's "You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold."

It has been the same in the 20th century: "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself"; "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country"; "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God almighty, we are free at last!" Structurally, these famous phrases that once stirred multitudes to action in war and peace are no different from advertising slogans—from "You deserve a break today" to "Just do it"—that have also stirred multitudes, in their own way. They are short, they are forceful, they are resonant. If not, they do not linger in the memory of the people, they do not survive.

Julius Caesar understood this principle, when, after defeating Pharnaces II in Anatolia in 47 B.C., he sent back to Rome not an orderly exposition of his strategy and tactics but the three-word sound bite, "*Veni, vidi, vici*"—"I came, I saw, I conquered"—to convince the Roman public that he was a man who could get things done expeditiously with maximum panache and minimum cost, just the man they wanted to reclaim the vacant post of dictator.

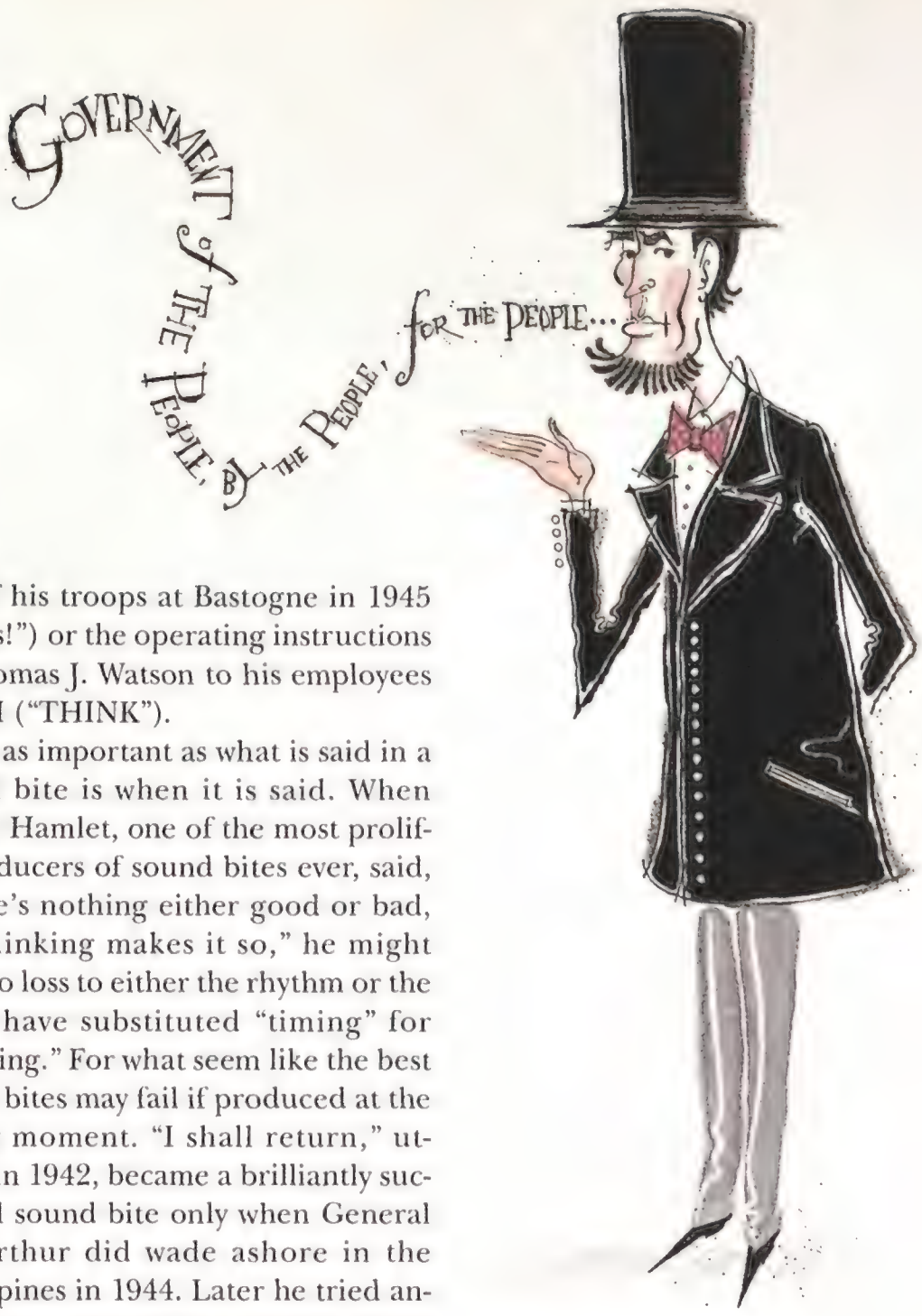
Among the first sound bites with which most of us come into contact are the Ten Commandments. If Moses had come down from Sinai with a tablet saying, "Violent suppression by sharp or blunt instrument of the life of another human being is hereby prohibited except under conditions as specified hereunder in sections 76(c) to 348(d) of the penal code or as may hereinafter be amended by a two-thirds vote of the Sanhedrin operating under the bylaws of the tribe of Ephraim or by the Fourth Session of the Third Lateran Council, Section XVIII, folio xxiii, Paragraph 12," he would have lost his audience in short order. Instead he said, "Thou shalt not kill," and most of us ever since have been willing to accept it as an overriding law of our lives, even if we know that there are enough exceptions and interpretations and clarifications to fill whole libraries. (Only two chapters further on in Exodus we are told not to suffer a witch to live.)

In November, voters will probably make their calm and reasoned judgment as to which side's sound bites get closer to the bone. Voters, of course, can be deceived. Unscrupulous rabble-rousers have often used sound bites to lead whole populations astray. The voters of 1840 who voted with their feet to the rhythm of "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too" and ran Martin Van Buren out of the White House, did not have the slightest idea of what they were getting in his place. The Russian peasants who rallied around Lenin's sound bite "Peace, Land, Bread" in 1917 did not foresee that he was heading them toward years of civil war and the confiscation of all their land. The Louisiana voters of the 1930s who elected Huey Long on his promise to make "Every man a King" are still looking for their crowns. A political outsider, the late Prof. Timothy Leary had only to leer at the forlorn teenagers of California and tell them to "Turn on, tune in, drop out," and it was déjà vu all over again.

Sound bites, like any other form of human experience, must have values attached to them, and as with most other forms of human experience, the values are up for grabs. "*Ein Volk, Ein Reich, Ein Führer,*" which helped sweep Adolf Hitler into power, is in today's world everyone's idea of a repulsive and destructive sound bite. If Hitler had won the war, it would have been carved on our monuments and printed on our currency.

Woodrow Wilson won re-election to the Presidency of the United States by a very narrow margin in 1916, probably owing to the success of a single sound bite, "He kept us out of war," five months before he asked Congress to declare war on Germany. Whether his re-election was a good or a bad thing for America or the world, or whether it really made any difference at all, are questions historians will be debating with decreasing vigor for decades. Punchy, effective sound bites can come in any form you want. They can even be long (within reason). Take, for example, the unforgettable 35-word sentence ("We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness") in Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, an otherwise mostly unremembered document. Mostly, of course, they are quite short, and have always necessarily been so, for the attention span of human beings is limited, though they are rarely as short as General McAuliffe's reply to the demand for surren-

Robert Wernick has created sound bites in SMITHSONIAN *for 22 years.*



der of his troops at Bastogne in 1945 ("Nuts!") or the operating instructions of Thomas J. Watson to his employees at IBM ("THINK").

Just as important as what is said in a sound bite is when it is said. When Prince Hamlet, one of the most prolific producers of sound bites ever, said, "There's nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so," he might with no loss to either the rhythm or the sense have substituted "timing" for "thinking." For what seem like the best sound bites may fail if produced at the wrong moment. "I shall return," uttered in 1942, became a brilliantly successful sound bite only when General MacArthur did wade ashore in the Philippines in 1944. Later he tried another one, after being relieved of his command in Korea in 1951: "In war, there is no substitute for victory." But since that war ended in a draw, the phrase has gone into the old curiosity shop of history along with "Disperse, ye rebels" (reportedly shouted by a British officer to the minutemen at Lexington in 1776), "Hang the Kaiser" (a rallying cry in the first World War) and "Mother of all Battles" (fight talk by Saddam Hussein in 1991).

In this field as in so many others, quantity is no substitute for quality. Today there may be more sound bites than were ever before dreamed of hovering through the fog of TV and the Internet, but when did you last hear one that could move a mountain or even win an election? Past ages have produced a rich garland of colorful sound bites that changed the world and echoed down the years (William Randolph Hearst to artist Frederic Remington in Cuba in 1898: "You furnish the pictures and I'll furnish the war"; Louis XIV to Parliament, and the world in general:"*L'état c'est moi*"; the cool Yankee, wise in the unreliable ways of 18th-century muskets, to the recruits at Bunker Hill: "Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes"). But the recent record is one of almost unrelieved dreariness. Look through all the files of news magazines and *60 Minutes* and spin doctors and media consultants of the past ten years, and you will come up with nothing more memorable than George Bush's appeal in 1988 to "Read my lips: No new taxes," which of course blew up in his face in 1992 when Democratic strategist James Carville fired back into the whites of his eyes with his war room slogan, "The Economy, Stupid."

If this is the best that our generation can do, what are our great-grandchildren, and future historians, going to think of us? It is true that such a poverty of invention is not necessarily fatal to the republic. The America of the late 19th century, held up to us as a model in some of the unsoundest bites of modern politicians, was a land faced with racial and sectional enmities, unbridled immigration, greed, rape of the environment, growing disparity between rich and poor, rampant criminality, homelessness. The statesmen who tried to deal with those problems won their elections more often than not by using a set of undistinguished and by now completely forgotten sound bites known collectively as "Waving the Bloody Shirt," the message of which was a claim to represent the heroes of the Civil War and an implication that the opposing candidate was a traitorous rebel at heart. Somehow the country survived, and perhaps we will, too.

Still, we are more prosperous, better educated and better informed than our great-grandparents were. Is it not time for the critics and commentators to stop whining and wailing about the nefariousness of sound bites, and devote their considerable energies to raising the level of public discourse by turning out a few good ones of their own? It would require some literary talent and a good sense of timing. But that has been the way of sound bites since God said, "Let there be light." ♜

By Bonnie Angelo

Family and faith fire the spirit of camp meetings

Each year at hundreds of sites across the United States, devotees flock together to share a time of singing, sermons and fun

The glow of reunion and revival radiates from the "arbor" during a service at Salem Camp Ground .

Talk about hot! Searing, stewing, unforgiving hot. At Salem Camp Ground in Newton County, Georgia, where Atlanta's tentacles creep out to embrace the not-quite-town of Salem, a thermometer registers a relentless 108 degrees F. Defying nature, assorted members of the very extended Ramsey family are relaxing on the porch of the rustic frame dwelling their forebears built in 1840, where generations of Ramseys have rocked and swapped stories ever since. A large floor fan toils in a fruitless effort to stir a little air on the porch. An American flag droops from a corner pole. "Can eyeballs sweat?" somebody asks plaintively.

The Ramseys, every one of them, normally live in preset levels of creature comfort, but here they are, in this cottage—a "tent," it's called—so primitive that in another location it might be the object of condemnation orders. Its weathered green-painted boards and jutting open porch make it look more like a back-roads general

Photographs by Lauren Greenfield

store than a summer place cherished by this old Georgia family. Inside and out, wood shavings are strewn over a dirt floor; a corrugated tin roof shelters—and bakes—the whole place. On the porch a congeries of Ramseys fan and mop and reach for one more cold "Co-Cola." My question to them betrays an abysmal failure to get it: "So why are you here?" "Because it's camp meeting," replies cousin Susan Robertson, her brow creasing in puzzlement that anyone should ask. "We wouldn't be anywhere else!" interjects cousin Laura Kemp, with a touch of scorn at my obtuseness.

For the Ramseys, along with the Vaughns and Elliotts, the Hickses and Ogletrees, and 200 or so other friends and kinfolk, their August is nonnegotiable: the week starting the Friday before the second Sunday is immutably set aside for the annual meeting at Salem Camp Ground. Their families, blood relations and acquired kin, have been going there since the first sermons were preached early in the 19th century, and now Katie Turner, 3, of the seventh Ramsey generation, races about in shorts where her great-great-great-great-grandmother frolicked in pinafores fashioned from flour sacks. Four generations are there on the porch at the moment. In the central chair is Uncle Spence, 82, the patriarch of the clan. He doesn't have a lot to say, but when he speaks, he is treated with gentle deference. Three grandmother-sisters and various permutations of offspring, siblings, nieces, nephews and cousins come and go, weaving a tapestry that is warm, embracing. Shared genes, shared history, shared values, all come together each summer at camp meeting, bringing a sense of belonging to a family, a faith and a place in a rootless world. After more than 200 years the tradition continues all across the country, a rebuke to the notion that sturdy family values have fallen into decay.

"Camp meeting." The term triggers images of poke bonnets and wagons, of well-thumbed Bibles and thundering evangelism. Part revival, part family reunion—and distinctly American—camp meetings were the inspiration of hardworking farmers, mostly Methodists, in the rural South and along the expanding frontier. The meetings gave purpose to "laid-by time" of late summer, the hiatus, they used to say, "between fodder pulling and cotton picking." The crops had been nurtured—now they could take time to nurture the spirit.

It was in 1786, two years before the country had a constitution, that the first small meeting took place at Cattle Creek, between Charleston and Columbia in South Carolina's Low Country. Now Johnny Summers, 65, shuffles through a trove of family papers and proudly reads from the deed in which his multi-great-grandfather, George Summers, gave the Cattle Creek Camp Meeting its permanent site "to preach and expound God's word therein, forever hereafter." From the outset, deeply religious Americans responded to the concept with such enthusiasm that in 1801 a meeting in Bourbon County, Kentucky, drew some 20,000 worshipers. Soon the outdoor gatherings ignited religious fervor across backwoods America. Huge crowds flocked to hear charismatic evangelists and socialize with like-minded folks. According to Methodist historians, "the whole of the wilderness country was aflame with revival fires."

The movement has survived wars and disasters, lean times of depression and fat times of hyperworldliness. Despite it all, each year tens of thousands of Americans trek to the woods and seashores for camp meetings.

Roofed extensions of Salem's modest cottages play host to the popular pastime of porch-hopping.

At the Cunningham-Ramsey tent, bountiful Southern cooking supplements Salem's extra helping of religion.

The oldest "tent," built in 1840 by ancestors of the Cunningham-Ramsey family, is behind trees at far right.

Sisters Julianne (left) and Taylor Ann Ramsey play cards on porch as cousin Mary Renee Wunder looks on.

Hundreds of sites are active across the United States, from Maine's Old Orchard Beach to the redwood forests of California, from the northern Michigan woods and lakes to posh Hobe Sound in Florida. There is something about worshiping out-of-doors that makes people feel closer to God.

To experience the spirit of camp meeting, there's no better way than a visit to Salem. Its early records, meticulously penned in the spidery handwriting of another era, are in the care of Salem's secretary-treasurer, Robert H. Elliott, known to all as Bobby. Searching through yellowed pages, he finds an entry explaining why this site was chosen: "Salem being a fine Methodist neighborhood . . . accessible from all points and having on the ground one of the finest springs in mid-Georgia." In 1828 its founders—"men of some means"—after felling the first tree from the virgin forest, "laid aside their tools and bowed in prayer, dedicating that spot to the worship of God." They built a simple "brush arbor," an open shed roofed over by fresh-cut boughs. And though brush has long since been replaced by a permanent roof, the tabernacle is still called the "arbor."

At Salem's graceful campground, twilight is falling. A bell clangs, signaling 15 minutes until the evening service. The Ramseys round up scattered children, tidy up, and with the rest of the "Salemites" begin to stroll, Bibles in hand, across the wide lawn to the arbor. Mary Sue Ramsey, an invincible 98-year-old who has been coming here since the turn of the century, leans on the arm of a daughter, her only concession to having lost her eyesight. A couple of adolescent boys swoop up on their bikes at the last minute. (Remarkably, kids go to services without being prodded. Of course, a ribbon-awards program adds incentive.) Tonight they'll be on their best behavior—yesterday a couple of Ramsey kids wriggled and nudged so much that their mother, who had missed that service, was reprimanded because they had not met "the code of behavior expected of the front row."

Inside, there's much meetin' and greetin' among old friends, many of whom see each other only this one week of the year. They settle onto the merciless wooden benches, and many ladies earnestly flutter their funeral parlor fans. Tonight, as every night, hundreds of outsiders drive in from Atlanta and neighboring towns to swell the congregation of worshipers. On the platform, the Stone Mountain United Methodist Church choir, forgoing robes for polo shirts, lift their voices in old familiar hymns. The congregation joins in vigorously, belting out "Down by the Riverside" with special zeal. An almost tangible sense of continuity hovers over the arbor. Wood shavings underfoot, lofty ceiling of yellow heart pine overhead—except for fluorescent tubes and a sound system, little has changed since the present tabernacle was built in 1854. Most of all there's the connection with long-gone forebears who worshiped here in just the same manner. Says a Salem regular, "You feel that they are around the altar."

Singing and sermons are the essence of camp meeting. The Rev. Gil Watson, tonight's preacher, mounts the platform, jacket off, hair tousled, waistline challenging his belt. He is pastor of Atlanta's large Northside United Methodist Church, a Bible scholar and a dynamic speaker much in demand for camp meetings. For this week's 15 interdenominational services, he alternates with the Rev. Jim Johnson, a Baptist minister from nearby Dunwoody. Dr. Watson, with his compelling energy

The Rev. Gil Watson, of Atlanta, generates his own heat with his spirited delivery of a sermon at Salem.

The Rev. Alice Rogers, the first woman to preach at Salem, shares a swing with nephew Jonathan Andersen.

Twins Becky Ramsey (left) and Alice Long met mates, the Rev. Nat Long and Sam Ramsey (right), at Salem.

and easy humor, does the impossible: he beats the heat. First he reels in his audience with a string of expertly spun anecdotes drawn from his early years as a country preacher. (They may be embellished, but who cares.) He bonds with parents as he relates his experience as father of a teenage daughter getting her first driver's license. By then we are all in his hands, listening intently to his serious message: "Your eternal life begins today." In this setting his delivery is intentionally more flamboyant than in his fashionable Atlanta church, carrying out the camp meeting custom of sermons that are "more earthy, more emotive—they are looking for something more intense. They want an extra helping of religion." That evening Dr. Watson both amuses us and provides that extra helping for us to take away and chew on.

At the first service I attended at Salem I did a double take: on the platform were two identical pianos and two identical pianists. Twins Becky Ramsey and Alice Long have this effect on first-timers. But don't think they are featured prominently because they are the wives of Sam Ramsey (Salem's main mover and shaker) and local minister the Rev. Nat Long (both marriages were made at Salem). The auburn-haired Griffin twins are professional classical musicians who have appeared in many two-piano concerts and have performed Mozart with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. Poor Mozart doesn't cut it at camp meeting. The pianists know that this congregation leans toward the gospel beat—florid in style, with lots of octaves, arpeggios and runs—and old-time hymns. The rafters resound with their spirited playing. Methodism's founder, John Wesley, believed that song and prayer were entwined, and in 1761 he instructed his flock to "sing lustily and with a good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead or half asleep. . . . Do not bawl. . . . Above all sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing." And so they do at Salem.

As the spirit is nourished in the tabernacle, the flesh is tended at the dining table. Sunday is the big day for both. After morning worship, families hurry to their cottages, quickly shedding hot nylons and neckties to get comfortable for some serious eating. With much amiable joshing, the Ramseys—44 strong—assemble for a group picture (pp. 74-75). Since nobody this side of the White House could seat that number, family clusters are dispersed in the four Ramsey tents. Afterward, they all come together again on Uncle Spence's porch.

On any day, camp meeting hospitality demands nerves of steel as the number turning up for dinner can expand from 10 to 30 in a matter of minutes. "They come out from under a rock," chuckles Ann Ramsey Cook. "In-laws and outlaws, church friends, golf friends." But one thing never varies: the meal always begins with a blessing.

And then there's the good old Southern cooking. Butter beans and golden squash and tomatoes like red bal-

Congregants old and young join together in song at "Big Sunday" service. Tenter Pebble Almand (behind two girls at left) has attended camp meetings at Salem for 53 years; Katie Turner (center, front), for 3.

loons, all fresh from the garden. Around the crowded tables, platters are passed and heaped again. Calls for seconds go out for Betty Ramsey Kincaid's fried potato patties, for Susie Ramsey Kemp's famed creamed corn. Calories are mostly uncounted at camp meeting; still, culinary correctness has taken its toll on frying in lard and fatback in the string beans. "We used to have a lot of fried chicken," sighs Cook, a bit nostalgic for good old cholesterol, "but that's given way in my tent to shrimp and pasta." Susan Robertson, with only slight exaggeration, describes the daily "eating frenzy" that begins with a breakfast of country ham, bacon, eggs and biscuits made from scratch, and moves, pausing for brief intermissions, through two other irresistible meals. "By the time the week is over, I'm kind of tired of Southern food," she confesses. "It's back to green salads."

This same time-honored pattern is taking place in each of the 25 tents that form a horseshoe around the arbor. That they are not tents is obvious. Rustic, primitive-looking—but unmistakably houses. In the early days of camp meetings, canvas wagon covers were draped into makeshift tents for family quarters, and tradition dies hard. Thus tents they were and "tents" they are, and the families who occupy them are "tenters," not just at Salem but at all camp meeting grounds. The Cunningham-Ramsey tent is archetypal, a narrow 20 feet wide by 100 feet deep. On either side of the center hall are bedrooms, monastic in size and frill-free; kitchen and dining areas are across the back. All of this is secondary to the porch, the socializing center. Each day tenters stroll the horseshoe, porch-hopping, catching up on personal lives, sharing a cold drink and a—oh, I really shouldn't—slice of cake. And if the preacher stops by and has an iced tea on your porch—that's prestige!

A few of Salem's tents boast modern kitchens, TV and telephones, and four are even air-conditioned. (Some Salem veterans privately cluck that comfying up the cottages is "pretentious.") But campgrounds everywhere resist too much updating lest it destroy the ambience that makes them special. At 128-year-old Morrison Camp Ground near Rome, Georgia, for example, it was not so long ago that plumbing came indoors. Until that

Author Bonnie Angelo, a correspondent for Time *magazine, attended a particularly sizzling camp meeting at Salem—"the hottest in memory."*

Merriment reigns as friends Ashley Fuller (left) and Tiffany Allison chill out at tenter's pool down the road from Salem. Fun and fraternity unite with faith and family to forge a rich tapestry of shared memories.

happy day, recalls Dr. Watson, a sixth-generation tenter there, "wasps and spiders were your constant companions in the outhouse."

In contrast, there's Ocean Grove on the New Jersey shore, established at about the same time as a "Christian seaside resort." It is now a modish National Historic District. Its vast 6,500-seat turreted Victorian auditorium features a summer-long program of esteemed preachers, distinguished speakers and big-name performers, ranging over the years from Enrico Caruso to Marian Anderson to Neil Sedaka, plus seven sitting or former Presidents. Yet Ocean Grove resolutely remains "dry" and keeps its beach closed until after Sunday services. It rescinded its total ban against automobiles on Sunday only in 1979—on court orders. A board vets would-be buyers of the community's pristine Victorian houses and is keeper and arbiter of the ten-year waiting list for leasing its 114 tents. Any change, including color, must be approved. Enclosed porches or, heaven forbid, 20th-century jalousies are summarily banned.

At the upscale extreme in camp meeting grounds is Oak Bluffs on Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts, founded in 1835 and now celebrated for its individualistic cottages—bright-hued, gingerbread-festooned fantasies that would be just right for Hänsel and Gretel. But the resort has not forgotten its roots. Its open-air tabernacle, a marvel of Victorian ironwork, still functions as an important site for religious services, concerts and other events. When President and Mrs. Clinton vacationed on the Vineyard, they attended services there.

Prowling through several Salem tents, it occurs to me that the discomforts of these dwellings, the numbing slat benches of the arbor, the general absence of amenities, might be a latter-day version of the hair shirts penitents of the Middle Ages wore to heighten their faith. Dr. Watson agreed that there was something to this notion: "I think there's the feeling you have to suffer. A lot of us think our religion has gotten too easy; there's a feeling we should do more. The monk does it cloistered in a monastery, the nun in a convent. What we are giving up is luxury—and this goes back to our Puritan roots. We have given of ourselves to God, and we're saying, 'God, are you listening?' For others, it's 'This is the way it was for my forebears—and I can endure what they endured.'"

But T-shirts are more the mode than hair shirts among Salem tenters. You might think that twice-a-day preaching, topped off by morning devotions and daily Bible study groups, would make for a straitlaced, long-faced gathering. Not at all. A week at Salem is memorable for retold stories, much laughter and general jollity all around. Bobby Elliott still relishes the time—50-odd years ago—that he and Clarence Vaughn, now

Homemade candelabras illuminate children's faces during the procession that ends the closing service of the annual Salem meeting. Jonathan Andersen (center) and Phillip Clegg (right) have never missed a summer.

chairman of Salem's board of trustees (the camp meeting's governing body), "swiped a freshly baked cake cooling on the windowsill." Susan Robertson recounts crawling out of a window for a late-night teenage frolic—only to be chased by her mother, whacking her with a cookie sheet. Rosemary Wunder, a tanned and trendy Californian, confesses with a grin, "This is where I got my first kiss." And Betty Ramsey Kincaid tells how, in 1994, David Kincaid proposed to her, then a widow of 65, on a bench in the tabernacle. She said yes, and they watched the sun rise over Salem. "It was cloudy," she beams, "but the sun was shining for me!"

But surely this intense family living causes occasional frictions? "No, not really," insists genial Sam Ramsey. At that, sixth-generation cousins Laura Kemp and Susan Robertson speak up, recounting the campaign to put a woman on the 24-seat board. "Women do the cooking here and take care of the children, while these days the men go to work—many of the men aren't here in the day," snaps Susan, who has taken time off from her work as a phlebotomist at Newton General Hospital to be at camp meeting. "After 165 years it was high time!" Laura Kemp, a social worker, notes with satisfaction. "We had to break up that good ol' boy network." Sam softly minimizes the uprising. Laura and Susan roll their eyes. When the well-qualified Ann Cook was nominated in 1993, the Ramsey women were jubilant. But when she failed to win enough trustee votes for election, they turned activist, making signs declaring "Sexual discrimination even at Salem Camp Ground!" Though they never actually put up the signs, their resolve was firm. "Camp meeting is steeped in tradition," Susan says. "Things are done that way because they did it that way." But in 1994 the trustees saw the light (or maybe the fire in the women's eyes) and Ann Ramsey Cook took her place in the long line of Ramseys who have shaped Salem.

Maybe the insurrection caused Sam Ramsey, the "permanent" program chairman, to think along different paths. Whatever the catalyst, this year he sprang a surprise at the arbor altar on Sunday morning: for the first time in Salem's 167 years, the preacher was a woman. His choice was inspired—the Rev. Alice Rogers, pastor of the Jackson, Georgia, United Methodist Church and Salem's own product. For 30 of her 34 years she shared those hard benches—"I remember squirming and kicking the sawdust"—and it was there that young Alice, at 12, accepted Christ. To her, this sermon was "the most important, the most personal, I've ever preached." It was a joyous success. Later, relaxing in khaki shorts, pink shirt and Reeboks, she says that when she entered Duke University Divinity School, "I didn't want to be a preacher. But it was a constant pull. It was like the Hound of Heav-

en—I felt that God was tracking me down." He won. And now the Rev. Alice Rogers' picture hangs alongside a string of Methodist bishops on the walls of the Salem Hotel, the campground's 23-room inn.

While camp meetings have probably changed less than any other American institution over the years, they do reflect the evolution from 18th to 21st century. Salem is blessed with a living bridge between two centuries, a walking history—Mary Sue Ramsey, who turned 98 in July. She has seen wagons morph into RVs, microwaves displace wood stoves and long, aproned dresses relax into slacks. Today she is wearing purple culottes and pearls, her nails manicured in rosy red, her white hair elegantly waved. Her recollections of the old days are crisply detailed. "We used to move in a two-horse wagon. It would be packed with springs, mattresses, trunks, boxes of cakes, Irish potatoes, preserves—just everything." The family next door brought the cow on a tether and cages of chickens destined for a short life. "We'd bring our cook—there were always at least a dozen around the long table."

The day would begin at sunrise, when "Mr. Plunkett" roused the camp with his bugle. Even with five daily services, there was ample time for socializing and not a little romancing. "I met my husband here on the campground in 1917," she remembers with a smile. "He took a bunch of us girls for a ride in his Model T, and he asked me for a date—to go to church—the next night. Oh, this was a good place to meet a sweetheart!" And from what I saw, it still is.

One major change in camp meetings charts the country's economy. Salem's treasurer of 33 years, Bobby Elliott (the treasurer is almost always an Elliott), is bemused by 19th-century records showing an intake of $1 from the sale of hay and an outgo of $3 a week for "servant at preacher's tent." It now costs about $45,000 to operate the one-week meeting. But happily, raising funds is no problem. The tenters willingly accept the responsibility of keeping their camp meeting alive.

But just what is it that draws them back to camp meeting, generation after generation? At Cattle Creek, Johnny Summers, in the unmistakable Low Country accent that slices "deed" into "dee-yud," says: "We worship, sing and have fun together." Which pretty well sums it up.

Salem women dip into their hearts unself-consciously to explain the true magic of this place that has been part of their lives since infancy. (Laura Kemp was brought in a basket when she was one week old.) Pianist Alice Long feels "my spiritual life reconfirmed, refreshed—a liberating experience." Susan Robertson, more down-to-earth, muses, "You get a big dose of religion, a big dose of what I should be doing all the time. You get plugged back in—you get your fix." Cousin Beth Frazier, the wife of a Baptist minister, who comes up from New Orleans with her two children, says fervently, "It's the religion that pulls everybody back—everybody shares the religion. The spiritual markers of my life are here. I want to share that with my children." Long-distance champ Rosemary Wunder flies in each August from California with her three youngsters, who

Four generations of Ramseys assemble outside the original family tent: elders Uncle Spence, 82, and Mary Sue Ramsey, 98, are seated at center; Mary Sue holds her great-granddaughter Katie Turner, 3.

were christened in waters from Salem spring. Why such an effort? "For values and traditions of family, for unity, togetherness." And there's something deeply comforting in this family bond: "Everybody in this family accepts everybody for exactly what they are," Susan explains. "You are not judged." Rosemary's friends back in Diamond Bar, an adjunct to Los Angeles, just don't understand the appeal of camp meeting—"I've given up trying to explain." What matters is that her California kids love it; Salem meeting runs in their blood.

At a time when people's lives tend to be in flux, families scattered, personal ties tenuous, the pace set on fast forward, these old-fashioned gatherings offer balm for the frayed spirit. In quiet woods and serene seashores across the country, American families are drawn by a yearning to hold on to our past, when values were stronger and standards clearly fixed, to return, if only for a few days, to a time when life was simpler and faith was true north on life's compass.

And across the Salem highway, where shopping malls and fast-food restaurants are irreversibly encroaching, "the finest spring in mid-Georgia" still bubbles clear and cool, refreshing and renewing—like the camp meeting it has served.

By Constance Bond

An art museum that can go wherever the railroads run

It started in 1971 in Michigan; now, Artrain is on a three-year nationwide tour, bringing an exhibition from the Smithsonian to 100 towns

Edenton, North Carolina—population 5,300—has a lot going for it. Nestled against the northwest corner of the huge and often unruly Albemarle Sound, the town has history: it was capital of the colony from 1722 to 1743, and its womenfolk held their own tea party not long after the Bostonians did; the governor is rumored to have made a deal with Blackbeard to allow the pirate to sail local waters. It has architecture: exquisitely restored houses with what must surely be the largest ratio of porch swings to residents of any American town. It has a local landmark: the old abandoned five-story, red-brick peanut company sits beside the tracks on the east side of town. It has an arts council: 20 years old this year, it sponsors dance and theater productions, and art exhibitions. But one thing Edenton doesn't have—yet—is a full-fledged art museum. That's where Artrain literally comes in.

Artrain is an art-museum-on-rails that consists of five cars: three gallery cars, a studio car and a caboose. Founded in 1971 by the Michigan Council for the Arts to bring art exhibitions to the people of Michigan, it proved so popular that by the mid-'70s it was touring other states as well. A nonprofit organization, Artrain doesn't collect art; rather, it borrows art from museums and other sources. In its quarter-century of existence, the train has logged more than 2.5 million visitors, carrying 13 exhibitions to more than 500 towns and cities. Its visits have had a far-reaching impact on some small towns. For example, on its first tour it pulled up in Ypsilanti, Michigan, with a show entitled "Man Creates . . . A Vision of Art and the Innovators" on board. The excitement it generated added momentum to local efforts to restore the rundown train depot area, and today "Depot Town," with its antique shops and its farmer's market—in the old railroad freight house—is a historic gem with strong community support.

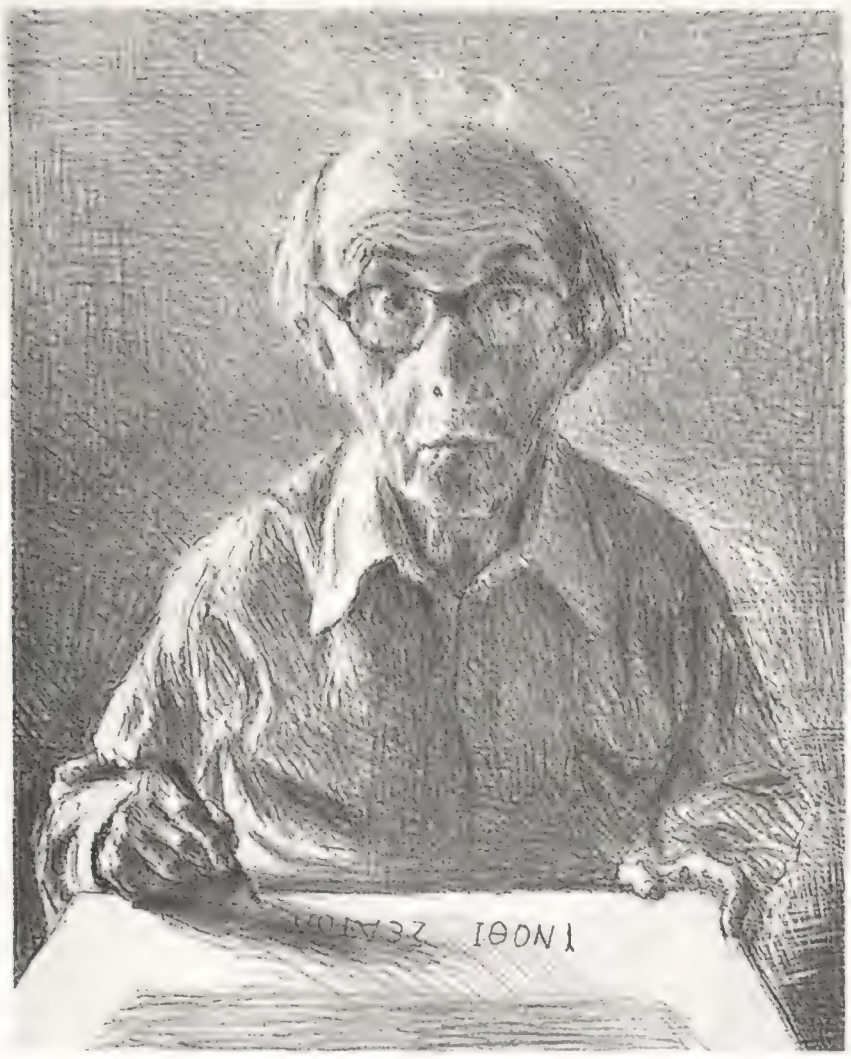
On its current three-year tour, Artrain is carrying an exhibition from the Smithsonian Institution for the first time. Entitled "Art in Celebration!" it consists of more than 30 limited-edition prints that were commissioned by the Resident Associates Program to mark major events at the Smithsonian and in the nation. Organized by SITES, the Smithsonian's traveling exhibition service, in cooperation with Artrain, it includes works by Alexander Calder, Georgia O'Keeffe, Sam Gilliam and other well-known artists. The newest work in the show, a print by glass artist Dale Chihuly entitled *Basket Drawing*, celebrates the "Art in Celebration!" tour itself.

The logistics of any show are complicated, but when the exhibition is on a train, they're positively daunting. Always of concern, especially these days, is funding. Although Chrysler is the primary sponsor for "Art in Celebration!" there are many sources of funding, from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs to a relatively modest payment from each of the towns on the

Photographs by Kelly Culpepper

Pulled by a Chesapeake & Albemarle diesel, the silver cars of Artrain cross the North Carolina coastal plain.

Inside the train in Edenton, North Carolina, three schoolboys talk about Otto Piene's print *Centerbeam!*



Raphael Soyer's 1982 lithograph *Self-Portrait* (above) and Elizabeth Catlett's *Children with Flowers*, from 1995, are among the 35 prints in "Art in Celebration!"

itinerary. Scheduling of the tour is done months ahead of time by Jean Steppe, from her desk in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where the Artrain headquarters is located. Above her desk hangs a detailed railroad map of the nation. It is not there for decoration. The train, which has no locomotive of its own, gets around the country through the good graces of local railroad operators. Then, there's the nuts-and-bolts stuff—such as making sure that adequate electricity will be available for the train at each stop and that the train will face in the right direction when it's parked (if not, it's a difficult glitch to remedy).

It's April when Artrain visits Edenton. On this stretch of the tour, the five silver-painted cars have hitched a ride from Norfolk, the previous stop, with a Chesapeake & Albemarle engine. Now, on opening morning, Artrain sits just down the tracks from the peanut mill as seven young staff members, walkie-talkies in hand, bustle around, preparing for the onslaught of schoolchildren due to arrive at 9.

Of the staff members who travel with the train, only Ric Omans, a thin, compact fellow with a long arrowhead-shaped beard, rides on board; the others go by van. When the train is moving, the caboose is his home; at the stops it serves as the office for the whole staff. This morning, the busy staffers pop in and out to make quick phone calls about such things as last-minute school bus schedules or voltage requirements. "Voltage is big . . . *very* big," laughs Arthur McViccar, who's in charge of crucial details like these for the tour. "We're running seven air conditioners, five dehumidifiers, lights, computer equipment, kitchen appliances and lots more, and many towns can't provide the power we need." On the way out, he pauses to refill his mug from the beat-up coffeepot that Omans is tending on the compact stove.

Omans has a cozy setup in his caboose home. On the wall above the phone is a detailed railroad map of the country, a twin of the one back at headquarters. Up above, in the cupola, an orange-and-yellow sleeping bag lies neatly folded on a platform. Lying there at night, when the train is moving, Omans can look out through the cupola windows in all four directions without even raising his head. "There are worse places to sleep," he jokes with understatement, his beard bobbing on his chest as he talks.

Among the local townspeople who have gathered on the grassy swath alongside the train this morning is the county arts council's executive director, Ann Perry, who was instrumental in bringing Artrain here. "We're celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Chowan Arts Council this weekend," says Perry; "and we're delighted that

Constance Bond, art editor of SMITHSONIAN, *last wrote about a collection of cigarette cases given to French spy Luzarche d'Azay (January 1996).*

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Artrain, with an exhibition from the Smithsonian Institution, will be a part of the festivities. Artrain provided fantastic education packets for the schoolteachers. A lot of the kids have heard of the Smithsonian, and they are thrilled that the Smithsonian is coming to them."

Beyond all that, says Perry, just the train itself—any train—is an event in this town. "It's been years since trains have come here," she explains. "There's one lawyer in town who's a real buttoned-up type. When the C&A engine delivered Artrain, it had to blow its whistle at the intersections. All of a sudden, here comes this lawyer, running down the street, his tie flapping. It was hilarious. He's just one of those train buffs, and they are a breed!" Like Ypsilanti, Edenton has a restoration project that Perry hopes will benefit from Artrain's visit. It's a huge, brick cotton mill recently donated to Preservation North Carolina, which proposes to transform it into a major cultural meeting place.

Jugglers, mimes and hundreds of kids

At 9 A.M. the buses start to arrive. Bright yellow and blue, their sides painted with county names—Currituck, Bertie, Chowan—they rumble across the tracks in an endless procession, lining up along the adjacent expanse of green. A huge tent has been set up, where the kids watch jugglers and mime artists as they await their turn to board. By the end of the day, 700 schoolchildren will have passed through the train; for most of them, it will be their first visit to an art exhibition. An equal number will come tomorrow, followed on the weekend by the general public.

In groups of 15, the youngsters climb a set of yellow metal steps into one end of the train, and after a short introductory video they funnel into the next car—the first of the galleries—where they are greeted by local volunteer Robin Sams. Yesterday, Sams and the other volunteers met with the educational staff to prepare to be docents. Sams, like many local volunteers on Artrain, is an artist; a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, the watercolorist lives with her husband on a 22-acre farm that supports cotton, peanuts and corn.

Sams is a natural-born teacher. "Come on in! Find your favorite artwork on the wall," she tells the kids as they enter. They fan out. Along both walls they see prints, some beckoning and colorful, others more mysterious. A string bean of a seventh-grader in oversized shorts examines a pair of pictures by Elizabeth Catlett. Both depict the same smiling woman with her arms spread wide around three children. The boy nudges his buddy. "Hey, those two pictures look exactly the same. Why would they put up two of the same thing?" His words draw curious classmates like a magnet. Sams comes over, too. "Are they really the same?" she asks. "Can you find one thing that's different?"

A ponytailed girl with a tiny pink backpack studies the textured fence stretching across the foreground of the composition on the right, her nose almost touching the glass. "The fence in this one is, like, *real*. . . and the flowers in this one, they're sort of hooked on. In the other one, it's all completely . . . flat." A classmate weighs in: "Their clothes are real in this one, too!" A sea of heads and pointing fingers jostles in front of the two pictures.

"That's right!" says Sams, explaining that the picture on the right is a collage, incorporating cutout raffia, fabric and other materials; and the other is a copy made from the collage—a kind of print called a lithograph. The youngsters' eyes dart back and forth as she talks.

Sams walks them past other prints, explaining the different elements of art and the different ways prints can be made. One boy stops in front of Raphael Soyer's penetrating self-portrait, in which the elderly artist raises his eyes from something he's just written to gaze straight out at the viewer. "What does it say?" he asks Sams. Again, the other kids gravitate over to see what he's talking about. "Those are Greek letters," she answers. "When you translate them into English, they say, 'Know thyself.'" The youngsters study the inquisitive face of the artist and the cryptic phrase he's written, then move on to the next print-filled gallery, where, again, a volunteer guides them along.

One thing about a museum in a train: it's long and skinny, so traffic jams inevitably occur. This morning it happens in the final car—the studio car—where two artists are at work: local sculptor Paris Trail, who is carving a leopard ray; and, beyond him, Artrain's resident artist for 1996, ceramist Kristen Bradley, who is molding hand-shaped forms. The rhythmic pounding of mallet against gouge reverberates in the small space, and the youngsters watch, transfixed, as the gouge bites out thick curls of hickory wood from the rough-hewn ray. "See, you can use this as a paddle, too!" he jokes, picking up the foot-long form by the tail and waving it around. The kids cringe, giggling.

In twos and threes, they finally leave the studio car, where their teacher awaits them at the bottom of the steps. "Let's go, let's GO!" she says, hustling them along toward the bus. And then she asks, "Did you enjoy it?"

"Yeah!" they answer in unison. "Let's go through again," one of them adds. But they can't; the buses have to get them back to school. Like Artrain itself, they're on a tight schedule. But for these youngsters, chances are that this particular stretch of rail, here on the east side of Edenton, will never look quite the same again.

Artrain in Edenton (clockwise from upper left): local artist Paris Trail carves a leopard ray; youngsters walk a rail; the staff; parked and open for business.

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train

By Richard Wolkomir

Making up for lost time: the rewards of reading at last

At the age of 64, a Vermont farmer takes on the demanding task of learning his letters and discovers the new world found in books

I decide simply to blurt it out. "Ken?" I ask. "Why didn't you learn to read?" Through the Marshfield community center's window, I see snowy fields and the Vermont village's clapboard houses. Beyond, mountains bulge. "I was a slow learner," Ken says. "In school they just passed me along, and my folks told me I wasn't worth anything and wouldn't amount to anything."

Ken Adams is 64, his hair white. He speaks Vermontese, turning "I" into "Oy," and "ice" into "oyce." His green Buckeye Feeds cap is blackened with engine grease from fixing his truck's transmission, and pitch from chain-sawing pine logs. It is 2 degrees below zero outside on this December afternoon; he wears a green flannel shirt over a purple flannel shirt. He is unshaven, weather reddened. He is not a tall man, but a lifetime of hoisting hay bales has thickened his shoulders.

Through bifocals, Ken frowns at a children's picture book, *Pole Dog*. He is studying a drawing: an old dog waits patiently by a telephone pole, where its owners abandoned it. He glares at the next pictures. Cars whizzing by. Cruel people tormenting the dog. "Looks like they're shootin' at him, to me!" he announces. "Nobody wants an old dog," he says.

Ken turns the page. "He's still by the pole," he says. "But there's that red car that went by with those kids, ain't it?" He turns the page again. The red car has stopped to take the old dog in, to take him home. "*Somebody* wants an old dog!" Ken says. "Look at that!"

This is my first meeting with Ken. It is also my first meeting with an adult who cannot read.

Sherry Olson (left), of Central Vermont Adult Basic Education, is the main tutor to Ken Adams (center).

I decided to volunteer as a tutor after a librarian told me that every day, on the sidewalks of our prim little Vermont town, I walk by illiterate men and women. We are unaware of them because they can be clever at hiding their inability to read. At a post office counter, for instance, when given forms to fill out, they say, "Could you help me with this? I left my glasses home."

Ken Adams is not alone in his plight. A 1993 U.S. Department of Education report on illiteracy said 21-23

As a volunteer assistant, author Richard Wolkomir often joins their weekly sessions at the community center.

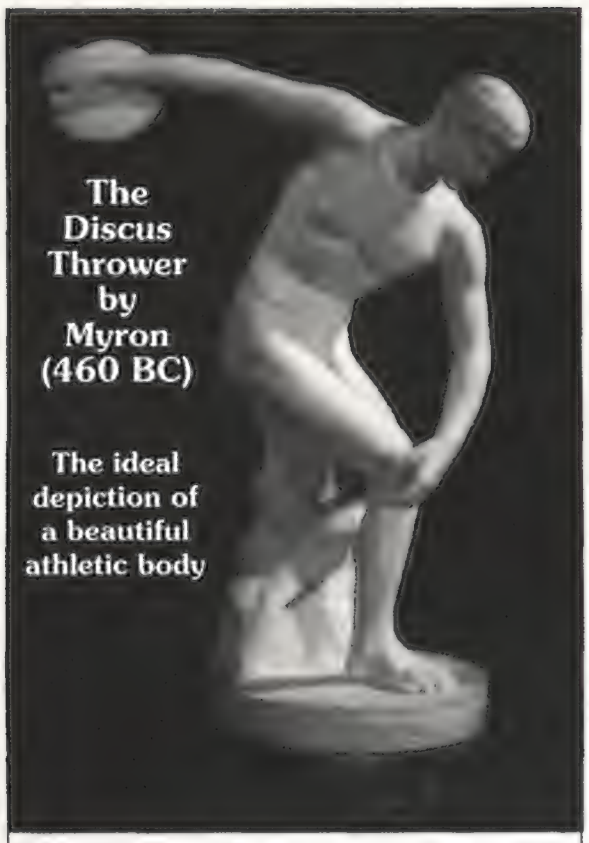
On this afternoon, Richard helps Ken sound out a word; the tutoring emphasizes sight recognition and context.

percent of U.S. adults—about 40 million—read minimally, enough to decipher an uncomplicated meeting announcement. Another 25-28 percent read and write only slightly better. For instance, they can fill out a simple form. That means about *half* of all U.S. adults read haltingly. Millions, like Ken Adams, hardly read at all.

I wanted to meet nonreaders because I could not imagine being unable to decipher a street sign, or words printed on supermarket jars, or stories in a book. In fact, my own earliest memory is about reading. In this memory, in our little Hudson River town, my father is home for the evening from the wartime lifeboat factory where he is a foreman. And he has opened a book.

"Do you want to hear about Peter Churchmouse?" my father asks. Of course! It is my favorite, from the little library down the street. My father reads me stories about children lost in forests. Cabbage-stealing hares. A fisherman who catches a talking perch. But my favorite is

Photographs by Sue Owrutsky



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Peter Churchmouse, a small but plucky cheese addict who befriends the rectory cat. Peter is also a poet, given to reciting original verse to his feline friend during their escapades. I cannot hear it enough.

My father begins to read. I settle back. I am taking a first step toward becoming literate—I am being read to. And although I am only 2, I know that words can be woven into tales.

Now, helping Ken Adams learn to read, I am re-entering that child's land of chatty dogs and spats-wearing frogs. Children's books—simply worded, the sentences short—are perfect primers, even for 60-year-olds who turn the pages with labor-thickened fingers and who never had such books read to them when they were children.

"Do you remember what happened from last time?" asks Sherry Olson, of Central Vermont Adult Basic Education, who tutors Ken an hour and a half each week.

I have volunteered as Sherry's aide. My work requires too much travel for me to be a full-fledged tutor. But I am actually relieved, not having sole responsibility for teaching an adult to read. That is because—when I think about it—I don't know how I read myself. I scan a printed page; the letters magically reveal meaning. It is effortless. I don't know how I do it. As for teaching a man to read from scratch, how would I even begin?

Sherry, a former third-grade teacher, gives me hints, like helping Ken to learn words by sight so that he doesn't have to sound out each letter. Also, we read stories so Ken can pick out words in context. Ken reads Dr. Seuss rhyming books and tales about young hippopotamuses helping on the family farm. At the moment, we are reading a picture book about Central American farmers who experience disaster when a volcano erupts.

"The people had to move out, and put handkerchiefs over their noses!" Ken says, staring at the pages. He starts to read: "They . . . prayed? . . . for the . . . fire? . . ." "Yes, that's right, fire," Sherry says. "They prayed for the fire to . . . go out?" "That word is 'stop,'" Sherry says.

I listen carefully. A few sessions ahead, it will be my turn to try teaching. "They prayed for the fire to *stop*," Ken says, placing a thick forefinger under each word. "They watched from

Like many poor readers, Ken has numerous other skills. An ace mechanic, he does his own repairs on the truck he uses for haying and odd jobs.

the s . . ." "Remember we talked about those?" Sherry says. "When a word ends in a silent *e*, what does that silent *e* do to the vowel?" "It makes it say itself," Ken says. "So what's the vowel in *s-i-d-e*?" she asks. "It's *i*, and it would say its own name, *i*," Ken says, pronouncing it "oy." "So that would be 'side.'" "Good," Sherry says.

Ken reads the sentence: "They watched from the side of the hill!" He sounds quietly triumphant. "They-uh," he says, in backcountry Vermontese. "That's done it."

After the session, I stand a few minutes with Ken in the frozen driveway. He has one foot on the running board of his ancient truck, which he somehow keeps going. He tells me he was born in 1931 into a family eking out an existence on a hardscrabble farm. His trouble in school with reading is puzzling, because Ken is intelligent.

For instance, he says he was late today because he had to fix his truck. And now he launches into a detailed analysis of the transmission mechanisms of various species of trucks. Also, during the tutoring session, we played a game that required strewing word cards upside down on a table and remembering their locations. Ken easily outscored both Sherry and me in this exercise.

Ken described himself as a "slow learner," but clearly he is not slow. Sherry has told me he probably suffers from a learning disability. People with these perceptual disorders experience difficulties such as seeing letters reversed. Although their intelligence may actually be above average, learning to read is difficult for them. They need individual tutoring.

"It was a one-room school, with eight grades, so I didn't get much attention there," Ken tells me. "It was just the same as the folks at home were doing when they kicked me along through the grades, and when you got to be 16, that's when they kicked you out."

After he left school, he left home. "Then you knock around, one farm to another," he says. "I'd get $15 a week, and room and board." Besides farming, he worked in bobbin mills and sawmills and granite quarries. "Then I was at a veneer mill in Bradford," he says. "After that I was caretaker at a farm for six years until I had to give it up because I had heart attacks."

Now he subsists on a $400-a-month Social Security disability pension plus $90 a month in food stamps. He lives alone in a farmhouse he built himself more than 25 years ago, five miles up a mountain dirt road. He earns money for his medicines by cutting firewood, haying, digging postholes with his tractor, snowplowing and cutting brush. "I'm doing odds-and-ends jobs where you can take your time, because the doctor told me I have to stop whenever I feel I need to rest," he says.

He cannot afford electricity from the power company, but he gets what current he needs, mostly for lights, by—ingeniously—drawing it from car batteries. To recharge the batteries, he hooks them up in his truck for a day. He also can charge them with a diesel generator. He waits until prices dip to buy fuel for his generator and tractor. "I've got a few maples around my house," he tells me. "I'll find a rusted-out evaporator, fix it up and make syrup—there's always a few things I can do, I guess."

I ask how he's managed all these years, not reading. He says his bosses did the reading for him. And now a Marshfield couple, lifelong friends, help him read his mail and bills and notices. But they are entering their 80s. "Now I've got to learn to read myself, as a backup," Ken says.

To find out more about what illiteracy does to people like Ken, I telephoned the U.S. Department of Education and spoke with the Deputy Secretary, Madeleine Kunin. She told me that only 3-5 percent of adult Americans cannot read at all. "But literacy is a moving target," she said. "We figure the 40 million who do read, but

Because of these tutoring sessions, Richard Wolkomir no longer takes for granted his own ability to read.

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Ken tackles homework at the kitchen table of friends who live nearby: using homemade word cards and tapes, he reviews the week's work.

at the lowest proficiency levels, have difficulty handling some of the tasks they need to hold a job today." Kunin, a former Vermont governor, cited that state's snowplow drivers: "Now they have computers attached, and they need a high school degree just to drive a snowplow."

Ken arrives for his next session in a dark mood. It turns out his tape recorder, used for vocabulary practice, is broken. "I can't fix it because the money's all gone for this month," he says. "I had to go to the doctor, and that's $30, and it was $80 for the pills, and they keep going up." He says one of his prescriptions jumped from $6.99 to $13 in two months. "I don't know if I'll keep taking them," he says. Illiteracy has condemned Ken to a lifetime of minimum-wage poverty.

He brightens reading a story. It is about a dog, John Brown, who deeply resents his mistress's new cat. Ken stumbles over a word. "Milk?" Sherry and I nod. "Go and give her some milk," Ken reads, then pauses to give us a dispatch from the literacy front: "I was trying to figure that out, and then I see it has an *i*," he says.

My own first attempt at solo tutoring finally comes, and I am edgy. Sherry has wryly admonished Ken, "You help Richard out." I show him file cards, each imprinted with a word for Ken to learn by sight. He is supposed to decipher each word, then incorporate it in a sentence. I write his sentence on the card to help him when he reviews at home. Ken peers at the first word. "All," he says, getting it easily. He makes up a sentence: "We all went away."

"That's right," I say. Maybe this won't be so hard after all. I write Ken's sentence on the card for him. Then I flip another card. Ken peers at it, his face working as he struggles with the sounds. "As," he says.

During our last session, he confused "as" and "at." Now he has it right. So he has been doing his homework.

"As we went down the road, we saw a moose," Ken says, composing a sentence. That reminds him that the state recently allowed moose hunting, game officials arguing that moose have become so plentiful they cause highway accidents. "Yesterday, I come around a turn and there was *ten* moose, a big male and females and young ones," Ken says. "They shouldn't be shooting those moose—they ain't hurting anyone, and it ain't the moose's fault if people don't use their brakes."

I flip another card. "At!" Ken says, triumphing over another of our last session's troublemakers. "We are at the school." But the next word stumps him. It is "be." I put my finger under the first letter. "What's that sound?" I ask. When he stares in consternation, I make the sound "buh." But Ken is blocked. He can't sound out the next letter, even though he has often done it before. "Eeeee," I say, trying to help. "Now put the two sounds together."

Ken stares helplessly at the word. I am beginning to understand the deep patience needed to tutor a man like Ken, who began these sessions a year before, knowing the alphabet but able to sound out only a few words. "Buh . . . eeee," I say, enunciating as carefully as I can. "Buh . . . eeee," Ken repeats. Abruptly, his forehead unfurrows. "Oh, that's 'be,'" he says. "Be—We should be splitting wood!"

"Was that what you were doing before the tutoring session?" I ask, to give us both a break. "Nope, plowing snow with my tractor for my friend who broke off his ankle," Ken says.

That is arresting information. When I ask what happened, Ken says his octogenarian friend was chain-sawing cherry trees when a bent-back branch lashed out, smashing his lower leg. Ken, haying a field, saw his friend ease his tractor down from the mountainside woodlot, grimacing in agony, working the tractor's pedals with his one good foot.

Ken himself once lost his grip on a hay bale he was hoisting. A twig poking from the bale blinded his right eye. Now learning to read is doubly difficult because his remaining eye often tires and blurs. These grim country stories of Ken's make my worries—delayed flights, missed appointments—seem trivial. I flip another card: "But." "Bat," Ken says, cautiously. "Buh . . . uh . . . tuh," I prompt. "But," he finally says. "I would do it, but I have to go somewhere else."

I write Ken's sentence on the card

and he reads it back. But he stumbles over his own words, unable to sound out "would." I push down rising impatience by remembering the old man in the woods, crawling toward his tractor, dragging that smashed leg.

Finally, I put away the cards, glad to be done with them. Tutoring can be frustrating. Why are even easy words sometimes so hard to get? Now we look at a puzzle. On one side it has pictures of various automobile parts. On the other side are printed the parts' names. The idea is to match the pictures and the names. Before I can start asking Ken to try sounding out big terms like "connecting rod," he points to one of the drawings. It looks to me like deer antlers. "Carburetor?" I guess. "Exhaust manifold," Ken says.

"What's this one?" I inquire. For all I know, it might be something Han Solo is piloting through hyperspace. "Starter," Ken says. It seems to me he is gloating a little. He points again. "Camshaft?" I ask. Ken corrects me. "Crankshaft," he says, dryly.

It is a standoff. I know the printed words. Ken knows the actual objects to which the words refer. "When I was a kid," he tells me, "I bought an old '35 truck. Sometimes it had brakes and sometimes it didn't. I was probably 17. It made lots of smoke, so mosquitoes never bothered me. But one day I got sick of it. I put it under a pine tree and I hoisted the engine up into the tree to look at it. The pressure plate weren't no good. And the fellow showed me how to fix it."

That reminds Ken of a later episode. "One time we had to get the hay in, but the baler was jammed. We had the guys from the tractor place, but they could not fix it. Finally I asked the old guy for some wrenches and I adjusted it, and I kept on adjusting, and after that it worked perfectly. I just kept adjusting it a hair until I had it. And then we were baling hay!" No wonder Ken's bosses were happy to do his reading for him. Even so, in our late 20th-century wordscape, illiteracy stymies people like him. And working with Ken

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has me puzzled: Why do so many people fail to learn to read?

I telephoned an expert, Bob Caswell, head of Laubach Literacy International, a nonprofit organization that trains tutors worldwide. He told me many nonreaders, like Ken Adams, suffer from perceptual reading disorders. But there are other reasons for illiteracy, and it is by no means confined to any one part of the population.

"People think adult nonreaders are mainly poor, urban minorities, but 41 percent are English-speaking whites," Caswell said, adding that 22 percent are English-speaking blacks, 22 percent are Spanish-speaking, and 15 percent are other non-English speakers. More than half of nonreading adults live in small towns and suburbs. Caswell cited U.S. Department of Labor figures that put illiteracy's annual national cost at $225 billion in workplace accidents, lost productivity, unrealized tax revenues, welfare and crime. One big reason for this whopping problem is *parents* who read poorly.

Well over a third of all kids now entering public schools have parents who read inadequately, he said. "Everywhere we find parents who *want* to read to their kids, but can't," he added. "And a child with functionally illiterate parents is twice as likely to grow up to be functionally illiterate."

But as I met some of Ken Adams' fellow students, I discovered all sorts of causes for being unable to decipher an English sentence. For instance, I met a woman who had escaped from Laos to Connecticut knowing only Laotian. She learned enough English watching *Sesame Street* ("Big Bird and all that," she told me), and later from being tutored, to become a citizen.

I also met a man in his 30s who worked on a newspaper's printing press. He could not spell the simplest words. He said it was because, at age 10, he had begun bringing alcohol to school in peanut-butter jars. After his son was born, he turned to Alcoholics Anonymous and mustered the courage to seek tutoring.

I met another man who had dropped out of school in frustration. Not until he tried to enlist in the military did he discover he was nearly deaf. The operator of a creamery's cheese-cutting machine told me he never learned to read because his family had been in a perpetual uproar, his mother leaving his father seven times in one year. And I met a farm wife, 59, who rarely left her mountaintop. But now, with tutoring, she was finally learning to read, devouring novels—"enjoyment books," she called them.

In central Vermont, these struggling readers receive free tutoring from nonprofit Adult Basic Education offices, each employing a few professionals, like Sherry Olson, but relying heavily on armies of volunteers, like me. Other states have their own systems. Usually, the funding is a combination of federal and state money, sometimes augmented with donations. Mostly, budgets are bare bones.

Many states also rely on nonprofit national organizations, like Laubach Literacy Action (Laubach International's U.S. division) and Literacy Volunteers of America, both headquartered in Syracuse, New York, to train volunteers. Laubach's Bob Caswell told me that, nationwide, literacy services reach only 10 percent of adult nonreaders. "Any effort is a help," he said.

Help has come late for Ken Adams. Reviewing his portfolio, I found the goals he set for himself when he began: "To read and write better. And to get out and meet people and develop more trust." Asked by Sherry to cite things that he does well, he had mentioned "fixing equipment, going to school and learning to read, trying new things, telling stories, farming." He remembered being in a Christmas play in second grade and feeling good about that. And he remembered playing football in school: "They would pass it to me and I'd run across the goal to make a score." He mentioned no fond family memories. But he had some good moments. "I remember the first time I learned to drive a tractor,"

he had said. "We were working in the cornfields. I was proud of that." And a later notation, after he had several months of tutoring, made me think of Ken living alone in his hand-built farmhouse on ten acres atop the mountain. "I like to use recipes," he said. "I use them more as I learn to read and write better. I made Jell-O with fruit, and I make bean salad. I feel good I can do that."

In our tutoring sessions, between bouts with the vocabulary cards, Ken tells me he was the oldest of four children. When he was small, his father forced him to come along to roadside bars, and then made Ken sit alone in the car for hours. Ken remembers shivering on subzero nights. "He always said I'd never amount to nothing," Ken says.

I ask Ken, one day, if his inability to read has made life difficult. He tells me, "My father said I'd never get a driver's license, and he said nobody would ever help me." Ken had to walk five miles down his mountain and then miles along highways to get to work. "And," he recalls, "I was five years in the quarries in Graniteville—that was a long way." Sometimes he paid neighbors to drive him down the mountain. "They said the same as my father, that I'd never get a license," he says. "They wanted the money."

It was not until he was 40 years old that he applied for a license. He had memorized sign shapes and driving rules, and he passed easily. "After I got my license I'd give people a ride down myself," he says. "And they'd ask, 'How much?' And I'd always say, 'Nothing, not a danged thing!'"

To review the words he has learned, Ken maintains a notebook. On each page, in large block letters, he writes the new word, along with a sentence using the word. He also tapes to each page a picture illustrating the sentence, as a memory aid. To keep him supplied with pictures to snip, I bring him my old magazines. He is partial to animals. He points to one photograph, a black bear cub standing upright and

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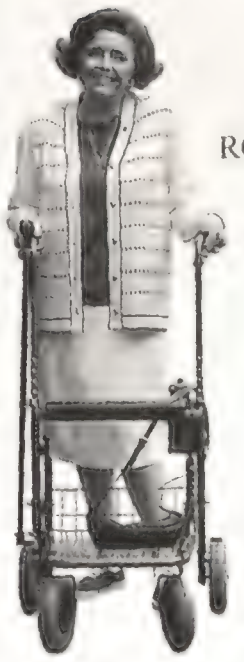

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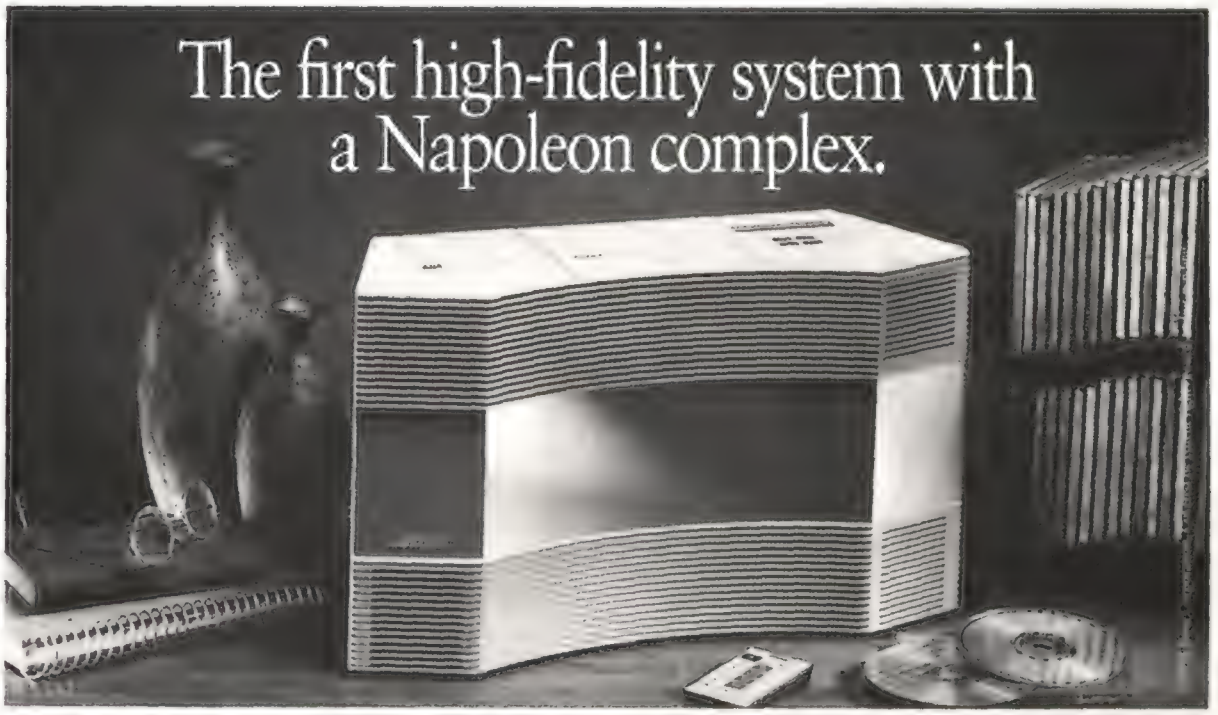

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looking back winsomely over its shoulder. "That one there's my favorite," Ken says. And then he tells me, glowering, that he has seen drivers swerve to intentionally hit animals crossing the road. "That rabbit or raccoon ain't hurting anyone," he says.

We start a new book, *The Strawberry Dog*. Ken picks out the word "dog" in the title. "That dog must eat strawberries," he says. "I used to have a dog like that. I was picking blackberries. Hey, where were those berries going? Into my dog!"

We read these books to help Ken learn words by sight and context. But it seems odd, a white-haired man mesmerized by stories about talkative beavers and foppish toads. Yet, I find myself mesmerized, too. The sessions are reteaching me the exhilaration I found in narrative as a child, listening to my father read about Peter Churchmouse. Our classes glide by, a succession of vocabulary words—"house," "would," "see"—interwoven with stories about agrarian hippopotamuses and lost dogs befriended.

One afternoon it is my last session with Ken. We have wrestled with words through a Christmas and a March sugaring, a midsummer haying, an October when Ken's flannel shirts were specked with sawdust from chain-sawing stove logs. Now the fields outside are snowy; it is Christmas again.

My wife and I give Ken a present that she picked out. It is bottles of jam and honey and watermelon pickles, nicely wrapped. Ken quickly slides the package into his canvas tote bag with his homework. "Aren't you going to open it?" Sherry asks. "I'll open it Christmas day," Ken says. "It's the only present I'll get." "No it isn't," she says, and she hands him a present she has brought.

And so we begin our last session with Ken looking pleased. I start with a vocabulary review. "Ignition coil," Ken says, getting the first card right off. He gets "oil filter," too. He peers at the next card. "Have," he says. And he reads the review sentence: "Have you gone away?"

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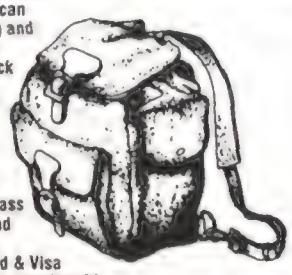

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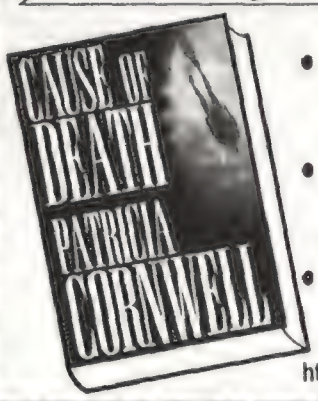

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He is cruising today. When I flip the next card, he says, "There's that 'for.'" It is a word that used to stump him. I turn another card. He gets it instantly. "But." He gets "at," then another old nemesis, "are." I ask him to read the card's review sentence. "Are we going down . . . street?" he says. He catches himself. "Nope. That's down*town*!"

I am amazed at Ken's proficiency. A while ago, I had complained to my wife that Ken's progress seemed slow. She did some math: one and a half hours of tutoring a week, with time off for vacations and snowstorms and truck breakdowns, comes to about 70 hours a year. "That's like sending a first grader to school for only 12 days a year," she said. And so I am doubly amazed at how well Ken is reading today. Besides, Sherry Olson has told me that he now sounds out—or just knows—words that he never could have deciphered when he began. And this reticent man has recently read his own poems to a group of fellow tutees—his new friends—and their neighbors at a library get-together.

But now we try something new, a real-world test: reading the supermarket advertising inserts from a local newspaper. Each insert is a hodgepodge of food pictures, product names and prices. I point to a word and Ken ponders. "*C*" he says finally. "And it's got those two *e*'s—so that would be 'coffee'!" I point again. He gets "Pepsi." Silently, he sounds out the letters on a can's label. "So that's 'corn,'" he announces. He picks out "brownies." This is great. And then, even better, he successfully sounds out the modifier: "Fudge," he says. "They-uh!"

We're on a roll. But now I point to the page's most tortuous word. Ken starts in the middle again, "ta?" I point my finger at the first letters. "Po," he says, unsure. As always when he reads, Ken seems like a beginning swimmer. He goes a few strokes. Flounders.

"Po-ta . . . ," Ken says. He's swum another stroke. "To," he says, sounding out the last syllable. "Po-ta-to, po-ta-to—Hey, that's potato!" He's crossed the pond. "Ken!" I say. "Terrific!" He sticks out his chin. He almost smiles. "Well, I done better this time," he says. "Yup, I did good."

Ken has relied on his friends Bertha and Perley Dexter to read for him; here, Bertha decodes a phone bill. Soon Ken will be able to do this on his own.

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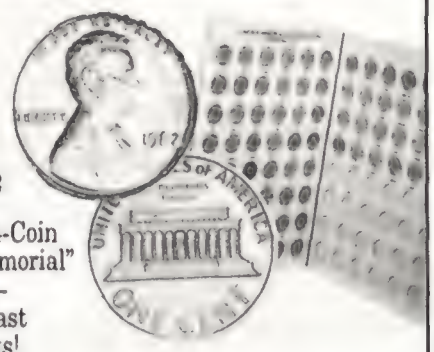

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Book Reviews

A Schoolteacher in Old Alaska
The Story of Hannah Breece
Edited by Jane Jacobs
Random House, $24

When she was 11 years old, Jane Jacobs trailed along with her great-aunt Hannah Breece as she paid a visit to a nursing home called, regrettably, the Home for the Friendless. Hannah had come to see a former colleague, and despite the grim setting, the two women soon were laughing and talking of their adventures decades earlier, when both had been dispatched by the Department of the Interior to serve as schoolteachers in Alaska. Eleven-year-old Jane retained only one sentence of their conversation: "He was rotten with syphilis."

It is fortunate, then, that Hannah Breece's family prevailed upon her to write an account of her 14 years in Alaska: otherwise this dubious—though memorable—snippet of oral history would be Hannah's entire legacy.

It took some years for the memoir to come to light. Hannah's niece first attempted to edit the "maddeningly unassembled" manuscript half a century ago, but she didn't get very far. "For one thing," she admits, "I lacked sufficient craftsmanship and knew it." Today Jane Jacobs is a renowned urban theorist—the author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* and *Systems of Survival*—and apparently she now has craftsmanship to spare. Her affectionate introduction and helpful commentary provide the historical context necessary to appreciate the story and fill in where Hannah's sense of discretion leaves a void.

"To be openly proper and conventional yet also openly daring is a way of being that was seldom available to women in the past," Jacobs writes. "Some who did pull off this trick without being either aristocratic or rich were Americans on the frontier. Hannah Breece was one of these women.

"To her great-nephews and great-nieces, of whom I was one, she had the glamour of a storybook heroine. She camped out with Indians! She held a hundred wild dogs at bay by herself and escaped them! She traveled in a kayak wearing bear intestines! A bear almost ate her right from her bed, and this time the dogs saved her!

"Hannah Breece was no rash or spry young thing in a band of spry young things when she experienced exotic perils. She was a middle-aged woman essentially on her own. Her job was serious and responsible: teaching Aleuts, Kenais, Athabaskans, Eskimos and people of mixed native and European blood in Alaska from 1904 to 1918. She was forty-five years old when she went to Alaska and fifty-nine when she completed her assignments there, a fact to remember when we observe her, in her memoir of those years, scaling cliffs, falling through ice or outracing a forest fire. That was part of the daring. She did those things encumbered by long and voluminous skirts and petticoats. That was part of the propriety."

The popular view in those days held that Alaska was no place for a lady—no matter how daring she happened to be. Purchased from Russia only 37 years earlier in a deal negotiated by Secretary of State William H. Seward, the territory still was regarded by many as "Seward's Folly." During Hannah's 14 years there the population never rose above 65,000, and if her account is to be credited, nearly all of these people were colorful eccentrics and adventurers. Rugged pioneers, blind sages, penniless widows, hardheaded clerics, village mystics and a mysterious "Reindeer Man" trail freely through these pages.

Of all of them, Hannah herself is easily the most engaging. Over the course of her 14 years in Alaska, Hannah pushes farther and farther into the interior, braving fresh hardships with each new assignment. "The people out there by themselves, groping for the light, appealed to me," she writes. Hannah has little patience for self-dramatization, so when we suddenly find her plunging through a hole in a frozen lake or nearly being swept away in a fast-moving current, she dispenses the details and re-

marks upon her own survival in the brisk, no-nonsense tone of a schoolteacher eager to carry on with the geography lesson. Occasionally she allows herself to dwell briefly on her rigors and privations, as when she describes winter at Iliamna, a village near Alaska's largest lake, where temperatures could fall to 45 degrees below zero inside her cottage. "Getting up in the morning was not delightful," Hannah concedes, "but I kept my parka and fur boots beside the bed and first thing slipped into them. Then I lit the two fires in my rooms, a quick operation since the fuel was all ready and a bit of kerosene or a lighted candle set the wood quickly ablaze."

For all of that, Hannah admires the "wild grandeur" of Alaska's winter landscape, although her relief is evident when the snow finally melts: "Summer and fall were lovely seasons," she writes. "The summer dawn came as early as two in the morning. . . . The sky was so blue, the grass so green, the air warm and mild. Every stump was covered with fern-like moss, and air-moss floating from the trees gave the forests a tropical air. Dandelions . . . were as large, brilliant and wide-petalled as asters."

Alaska's native traditions and folklore also hold a particular fascination for her. "They were superstitious about the whale hunt," she writes of the men on Wood (now Woody) Island, near Kodiak Island. "While the men were on the water, women were forbidden to cast their eyes toward the sea, so every woman had to stay closely indoors. If a whale was wounded and a woman looked at it, they believed, one of the hunters was sure to be killed and the whale itself would escape. They also believed that when the men started out, a tiny man no bigger than a finger ran on top of the water after the bidarkas [kayak-like boats]. If he caught up to one and climbed on it, the man in that bidarka would surely be killed."

During her time in Alaska, Hannah had frequent correspondence with Sheldon Jackson, head of the Alaska division of the Bureau of Education in the Department of the Interior. A Presbyterian missionary, Jackson came to be known as the "Bishop of All Beyond" for his efforts to bring civilization to Alaska—a cause he apparently viewed as a holy crusade. Jane Jacobs came to take a dim view of Jackson while editing her great-aunt's memoir and describes him as a man bent on "expunging native ways, root and branch, and exerting total control."

Against this background, the compassion of Hannah Breece's teaching methods seems all the more remarkable. "Jackson thought in terms of control, Hannah in terms of nurturing," writes Jacobs. "She was eager to open her pupils' eyes to the great world beyond their hermetic ken through study of geography, stories and pictures of other people and how they lived; nature study that went beyond the economic and practical; introduction of new games and toys, evidence that people far away knew and cared about them."

Hannah Breece died in 1940 at the age of 80 after a long retirement in Oregon and Pennsylvania, during which she occasionally gave lectures on her Alaskan experiences. For all the richness of this material, Jacobs originally hesitated to publish her great-aunt's manuscript: "Some of her assumptions and assertions, to my mind, were imperialist, chauvinist and racist—white man's burden stuff." Now, more than 50 years later, Jacobs has come to regard these elements as necessary to the story, inherent to the times and central to understanding what possessed Hannah to go to Alaska in the first place. It must be said that by the end of her memoir, Hannah has clearly begun to register a certain ambivalence about her role.

The result is a thoughtful and entertaining memoir. "I was glad," writes Hannah, "that I had had a small part in blazing the way for better things in this most beautiful, most wonderful land."

After all, as her great-niece concludes, "What more could a pioneering teacher ask?"

Daniel Stashower is a freelance writer who is based in Washington, D.C.

William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic
Alan Taylor
Knopf, $35

It is sometimes hard to remember today, in an era when conservation has been elevated to the level of secular religion, that there was a time when Americans thrilled at the destruction of nature. "Leave to Caesar the boast of having destroyed two million of men; let yours be that of having cut down two million of trees. He made men disappear from the fruitful soils where they were born; your labours made a new and happier race appear where none before had been," an investor wrote glowingly, in 1807, to William Cooper, the most celebrated land speculator of his time. Cooper's remarkable life transcended his humble origins as a nearly illiterate wheelwright and his flamboyantly flawed ethics. His meteoric political career as a frontier power broker—recounted in fascinating detail by Alan Taylor, a professor of history at the University of California at Davis, who won this year's Pulitzer Prize in history for his book—vividly encapsulated the first halting steps in the development of American democracy in the decades after the American Revolution. No less significantly, Cooper's saga also became fodder for the first great popular American literature, the novels of his son, James Fenimore Cooper.

Upstate New York was then the new nation's frontier. Its hectic transformation from wilderness to farmland was guided by rough-and-ready types like Cooper, a lapsed Quaker, self-made man and founder of Cooperstown, New York (today best known as the home of the Baseball Hall of Fame). Cooper was the kind of man who made pioneering possible. He purchased vast tracts of woodland and then sold or leased them to individual settlers. A stranger to modesty, he saw himself as a visionary blessed with courage and foresight.

Beneath the heroic pose, Cooper was representative of the new men who saw financial opportunity in the chaotic aftermath of the Revolution. His methods were crude but effective. Having avoided taking sides during the Revolution, Cooper manipulated the property of exiled Tory friends (among them, the son of Benjamin Franklin) to make himself master of thousands of acres around Otsego Lake. To finance his speculations, he borrowed huge sums, which he rarely repaid, leaving a legacy of claims and counterclaims against his estate that took years to unravel. Nevertheless, he succeeded in populating the entire district in record time, creating a pattern for many later settlements.

Sensitive about his own coarse manners, Cooper was determined to make Cooperstown a seat of gentility that would be a model for the young nation. In that, too, he had considerable success, arranging for the establishment of a newspaper and academies of learning, and sponsoring architecture that is still admired for its neoclassical grace.

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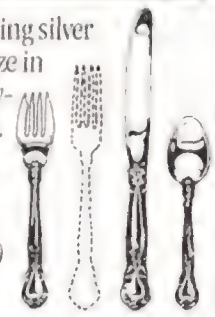

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Politically, the last years of the 18th century were a critical time for the largely untried democracy, a watershed in the lurching transition from government dominated by wealthy patricians to the more freewheeling politics played out by competing parties, and William Cooper was right in the middle of it. Condescendingly styling himself as "Father of the People," the arch-conservative Cooper parlayed his wealth into political influence, winning election as a judge, then to the State Senate, and finally to the U.S. Congress. For a time, the huge Federalist majorities that Cooper produced made Otsego County the pivot of New York state politics, and a factor even in national elections.

In contrast to the relatively disciplined young Republican Party of Jefferson and Madison, however, Cooper's Federalists were a loose, often fractious, collection of men who depended on the obedient votes of docile tenants and debtors in order to win elections. Dominant during the first years of the republic, Federalist fortunes eventually foundered against the popularity of the increasingly self-assertive democrats. These ascendant populists were no longer cowed by wealth and were not prepared to see the political fruits of the Revolution hijacked by a new generation of native squires like Cooper.

His reputation dimmed by lawsuits, Cooper reluctantly retreated from politics and attempted, without much luck, to repeat his Cooperstown success in the less fertile regions of the St. Lawrence valley. After his death, in 1809, the pyramid of debt and questionable transactions that he had erected finally collapsed around his heirs.

It was, in part, in an effort to recoup the family's fortune that James Fenimore Cooper turned to writing. In doing so, he created a new, distinctively American genre of adventure fiction peopled with Indians and colorful frontiersmen, whose descendants continue to inhabit Hollywood Westerns even today. In an unraveling of the meanings buried within the serpentine prose of James Fenimore's 1823 novel *The Pioneers*, Taylor shows how the novelist converted his father's often unsavory story into a symbolic triumph over the popular democracy that he hated, and that had, James Fenimore believed, snatched away the patrimony that he had expected to claim. In *The Pioneers*, Taylor observes, Cooper reclaimed his lost legacy by crafting an improved past, where property and power flow from a flawed patriarch to his genteel heirs, in a vision of America that, fortunately, was defeated in real life by the democratic tidal wave of the late 1790s.

That may have been only a novelist's wishful dreaming, but the democrats' apparent victory ultimately proved less complete than it seemed. Although the polemics of radical democracy had, by James Fenimore's time, become the common coinage of political discourse, government was fast becoming the province of a new breed of political specialists—mainly lawyers and newspaper editors—as real power passed in great measure to the new corporations of private wealth, and banks. Writes Taylor: "Paradoxically, as common white men became the essential audience for aspiring officeholders, the power of these offices diminished. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the substantive meaning of democratic participation became diluted by the divorce of economic from political power."

American political life was already forming a pattern that, in many ways, is the one we know today. While William Cooper might have been perplexed by modern Americans' affection for untrammeled wilderness, he probably would not have felt out of place in the world of money politics and bare-knuckle negative campaigns.

Fergus M. Bordewich is the author of *Killing the White Man's Indian: Reinventing Native Americans at the End of the Twentieth Century.*

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150 1846–1996 Smithsonian Birthday Party on the Mall Washington, D.C.

August 10-11, 1996

In celebration of its 150th anniversary, the Smithsonian will host a free two-day, mile-long outdoor festival on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., between 3rd and 14th streets. All Smithsonian museums will participate in the festivities, which will include musical performances, educational programs, family activities, museum open houses, debates, fireworks, birthday cakes, food concessions and other special programs. Come join Smithsonian staff and national celebrities such as Buzz Aldrin, Ossie Davis, Betty Freidan, Mickey Hart and E. G. Marshall in marking this important occasion.

Hours

August 10—10:30 A.M. - 9:30 P.M.
August 11—Noon - 9:30 P.M.

Festival Highlights

• **Smithsonian Pavilions** Explore the Institution and discover, by visiting 23 outdoor museum pavilions, how Smithsonian staff research, conserve and exhibit our national treasures. Design a stamp, create a topiary, sit in an F-100 cockpit, ask an astronomer, cut a silhouette, tell us your story, or learn about DNA, rainforest ecology and exhibition design.

• **Museum Open Houses** Most museums on the Mall will be open 10 A.M. - 9:30 P.M. on both August 10 and 11. Other Smithsonian museums will operate on regular hours. Shuttle buses will be available to the public from the Mall to the Anacostia Museum, the National Zoo, the National Postal Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, the National

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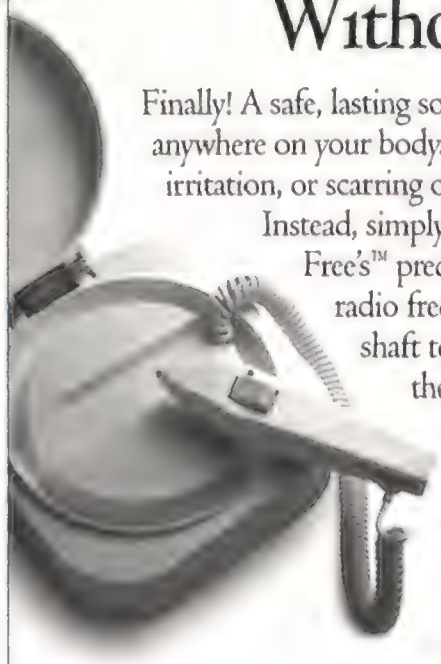

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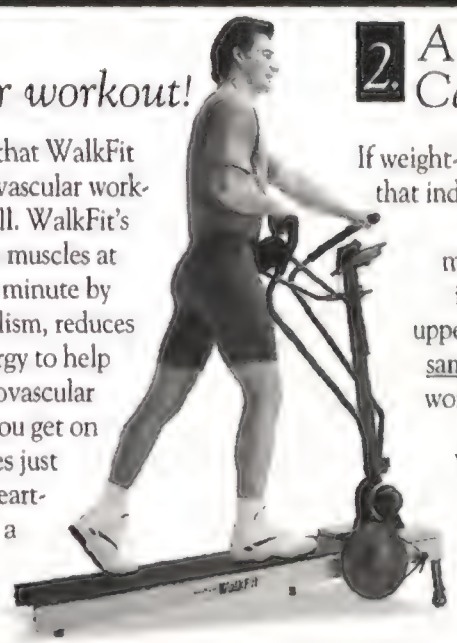

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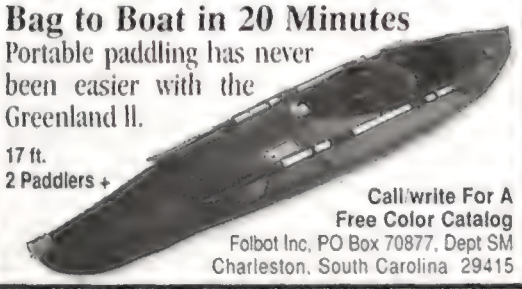

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• **Installation and Ringing of the Castle Tower Bell** A specially forged Sesquicentennial Bell will be permanently installed in the Castle clock tower. See *Around the Mall*, page 14.

• **The World's Biggest Birthday Card** Key in your personal birthday greeting. Your message will appear on a jumbotron screen before it enters the Smithsonian permanently as part of the Institution's electronic collections.

• **Birthday Cakes** See spectacular birthday cakes decorated by 18 of America's premier chefs.

• **Food and Sales** A variety of celebratory foods and birthday treats will be available from an array of special food concessions, open noon - 9 P.M. both days. Outdoor Smithsonian museum shops will offer 150th-anniversary merchandise, T-shirts, books and sign-ups for the newly minted Smithsonian Institution commemorative coins.

• **Fireworks** Watch an unprecedented fireworks display over the Smithsonian Castle and the Washington Monument, August 10, 9:05 P.M. (rain date: August 11).

The two-day celebration is one of several Smithsonian 150th-anniversary projects funded by corporations. Discover Card, Intel Corporation, MCI Communications Corp. and Trans World Airlines, Inc., have joined the Smithsonian's Corporate Partner Program, which supports the festival, television programs throughout the year on the CBS Television Network, and the "America's Smithsonian" traveling exhibition.

For further details call Smithsonian Information at (202) 357-2700 (voice) or (202) 357-1729 (TTY). Particulars will also be posted to the Smithsonian's homepage: http://www.si.edu.

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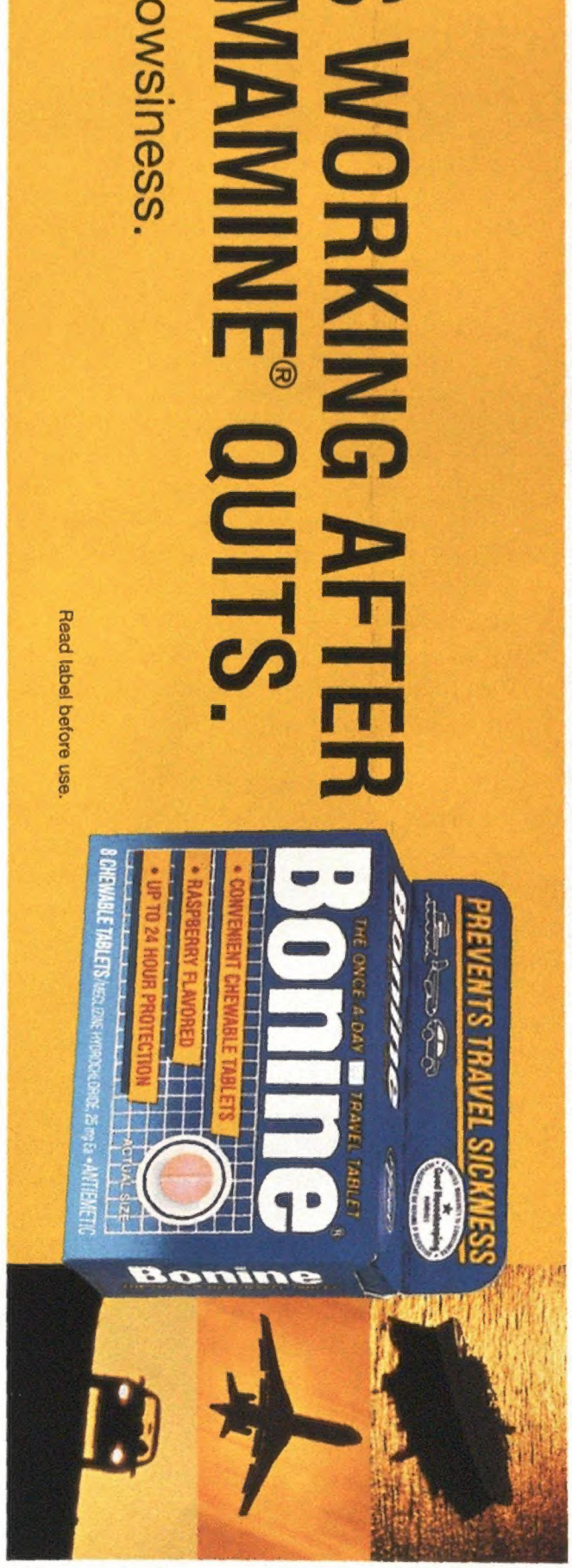
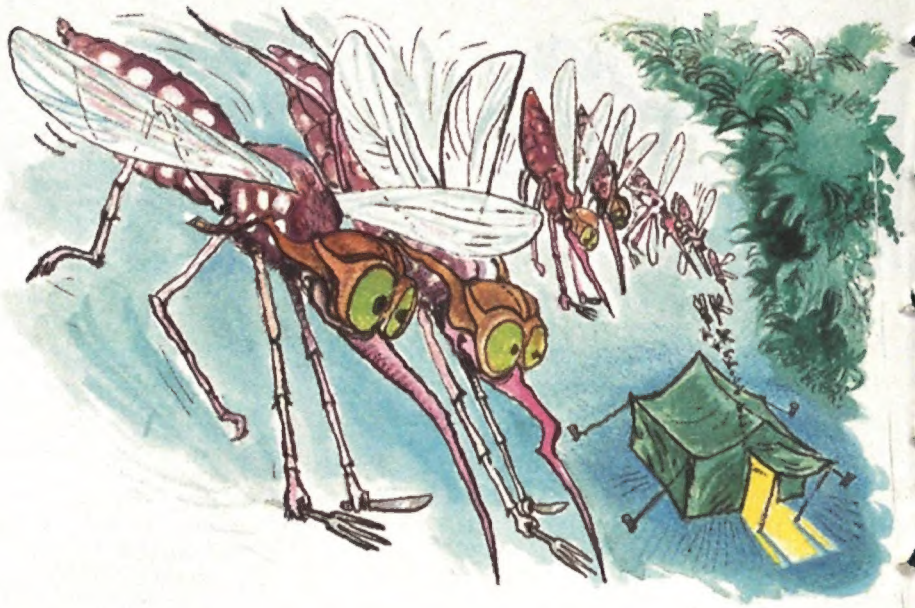


By Richard Conniff

When I said I wanted to be wanted for my body, this is not what I had in mind



It is mosquito season again, time for entertaining unwholesome thoughts about nature. Just now, as it happens, I was reading one of my old journals from a trip somewhere in South America, when I turned the page. There, flattened next to the binding, was the dark smudge of a mosquito and, on the opposite page, its Rorschach image in dried blood, probably my own.

All the unheralded charms of the rain forest came rushing back to me: the way my clothes were always caked and sodden with mud, the way the howler monkeys roared their jocund welcome and flung sticks at my head, the feeling of sliding down wet clay trails and shuffling cautiously over a wobbly one-log bridge at midnight in the endless rain, with a dehydration headache welling up behind my dripping brow. But above all, I recalled the relief of finally making it back to camp, to sleep and to give sustenance to mosquitoes.

For those of you who have not had the pleasure of experiencing this almost sacramental moment of union with Gaia, here is what it feels like.

You drop your clothes in a clay-heavy heap, leaving your puckered flesh bare just long enough for the mosquitoes to roar in like sooners at a land rush. This causes you to dive into your individual cocoon of netting drapery, and of course the mosquitoes follow. You spend the next ten minutes slapping and spattering winged droplets of your own blood all over the netting and the sheets. Then, having killed the last mosquito, you recollect that you have forgotten to pee, climb back out (after longing, in vain, for a catheter) and do it all over again.

According to my journal for that night, the sound of slapping finally died away, and there was a brief period during which the hostility and bone weariness of the day succumbed at long last to peace. Across the way, one of my travel companions looked up disconsolately at his white shroud and remarked: "I feel like a pupa."

"I was beginning to think of you as a maggot," the tough guy in the group replied. (Did I mention that I was traveling with field researchers who learned their manners largely from insects, and not social insects either?)

"I've got a tear in my mosquito net," someone else said, as he started slapping again.

The tough guy immediately began speculating on whether it would be possible for mosquitoes to drain enough blood to kill a person and how long it might take. (The tough guy had apparently learned his manners largely from the botfly, a type of insect that gets its eggs under your skin, where the developing larvae wriggle and otherwise annoy you for weeks on end.) "A mosquito only takes a millionth of a gallon per bite," said the pupa. He was a decent guy who liked to smooth things over. "It couldn't happen."

"Brazoria, Texas, 1980," said the tough guy. "There were so many mosquitoes they killed the cattle. Autopsies said half the blood in their bodies was missing . . ." He enjoyed trying to keep us awake at night with entomological horror stories.

"I wish I was home," sobbed the guy with the torn netting.

"Home!" sneered the tough guy. This was too much. Were it not for his own mosquito netting, I believe he would have spat to emphasize his contempt. Then, as if this were the one thing that might be better, he said, "We could be in the Arctic tundra."

He proceeded to explain that spring in the tundra is so short and sudden that the snowmelt hatches all the dormant mosquito eggs virtually at the same time. The entire population of mosquitoes then has about 20 minutes to mate, find a victim, get a blood meal, and lay a new batch of eggs before winter sets in again.

Some Canadian researchers once forced themselves to sit still in such a swarm long enough to report that they suffered 9,000 bites a minute.

"Those Canadians know how to have fun," said the pupa.

Suddenly sleep whacked me sideways on the head, and I fell into a dream about all those newly emerged little vampires taking wing in one vast, sky-darkening, bloodsucking swarm, their collective need for a meal so sudden and intense that unlucky, half-frozen victims were literally being sucked to death everywhere I looked.

When I woke in the middle of the night, I saw that the tough guy had flopped sideways against his netting. Mosquitoes were now congregating eagerly in a black knot on the other side, threading their proboscises through the fabric into his rump.

I calculated how much blood he was losing at a millionth of a gallon per bite, and I contemplated waking him up, but didn't. I figured it was what he would have wanted.

To drown out the sound of the mosquitoes' bloodthirsty droning, I put on some earphones and a soothing tape called "Rain Forest Retreat." ("A myriad of beautiful butterflies dance in the shafts of sunlight that filter through a warm, soft mist . . .") I slept the rest of the night like a baby, being careful to keep to the middle of the cot.

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